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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

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 an 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.

Name of Property

historic name Floyd County Court House

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 101 S. Main Street N/A  not for publication

city or town Charles City N/A  vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Floyd code 067 zip code 50616

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Rowell J. Soike July 10 2003  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

**IOWA HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA**

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 certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

inserted in the Signature of the Keeper  
National Register

AUG 28 2003

Date of Action

determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Floyd County Court House  
Name of Property

Floyd County, IA  
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**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	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>		buildings
<u>1</u>		sites
		structures
	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa MPD

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/courthouse  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/courthouse  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/PWA Moderne  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/limestone  
walls BRICK  
STONE  
roof ASPHALT  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

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**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.)

Property is:

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

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

GOVERNMENT

**Period of Significance**

1940 - 1953

**Significant Dates**

1940

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Hansen & Waggoner

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Floyd County Auditor's Office

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than 5 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 [1|5] [5|2|5|9|3|0] [4|7|6|7|9|4|0]      2 [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]  
Zone Easting Northing      Zone Easting Northing

3 [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]      4 [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]  
Zone Easting Northing      Zone Easting Northing

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.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Marlys A. Svendsen, Svendsen Tyler, Inc.

organization for State Historical Society of Iowa date January 2003

street & number N3834 Deep Lake Road telephone 715/469-3300

city or town Sarona state WI zip code 54870

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the complete 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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Floyd County, c/o Bret Stowe, Auditor

street & number 101 S. Main Street telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Charles City state IA zip code 50616

**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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
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## 7. Description

**Site:** The Floyd County Court House (contributing) was built in the county seat of Charles City in east central Floyd County in 1940-1941. The courthouse site (contributing) is a square block bounded by South Main Street on the southeast side, Court Street on the northeast side, South Jackson Street on the northwest side, and Gilbert Street on the southwest side. The courthouse is approximately one block from the Cedar River, which runs diagonally through Charles City from northwest to southeast. The central business district is located on the opposite side of the river northeast of the courthouse. Most of the courthouse site is level with the northwest corner gently sloping towards the Cedar River. Gilbert Street carries traffic of U.S. Highway 218 as well as U.S. Highway 18. Highway 18 crosses the river on Main Street and passes in front of the courthouse before it turns to join Highway 218 and continue to the west.

The courthouse square has a dense cover of deciduous and coniferous trees including a grove of cedar trees on the east corner of the square established where a filling station stood earlier. The area at the rear of the building is terraced with paved parking areas on both levels. A multi-story flagpole (non-contributing) located near the intersection of South Main and Gilbert Streets was installed at an unknown date. The previous county courthouse stood on this site but no historic archeological investigation has been made to determine the presence of foundations or other building remains. The blocks immediately surrounding the courthouse include a mix of medium scale masonry and frame buildings. An important visual landmark is St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church located diagonally across the street from the courthouse at the corner of Gilbert and South Main streets.

**Exterior:** The Floyd County Court House is one of ten courthouses built in Iowa during the federal Public Works Administration (PWA) program's operation in the 1930s and early 1940s. It was built with a rectangular footprint measuring approximately 100 feet by 70 feet with the front oriented toward the east. Unlike most of the other PWA-Era Courthouses, it has no subsidiary wings. The courthouse is constructed of poured concrete and faced with tan-colored pressed brick manufactured by the Rockford Brick and Tile Company,<sup>1</sup> matching mortar, and limestone trim. The foundation is clad in Bedford stone, a hard, gray limestone quarried in Indiana and used in constructing most of the PWA-Era courthouses in Iowa. Decorative cut stone includes Bedford stone and red granite.

**Front elevation:** On the front or southeast elevation, the building's central section is nine bays wide with a height of 4 stories or approximately 48 feet. The five center bays form a pavilion-like central section that projects forward slightly. The height of the center section is also several feet taller giving the building the appearance of a stepped parapet. A basement level extends beneath the entire building. The raised foundation walls of the outer bays are clad in Bedford stone and

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<sup>1</sup>Rockford Brick and Tile Co. was headquartered in Rockford located in southwest Floyd County. "Large Crowd Attends the Ceremony," *Charles City Press* (Charles City, Iowa), October 21, 1940.

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polished red granite in the central section. A broad set of entrance steps constructed of red granite with separate flights extending in three directions has matching polished granite blocks serving as balustrades. The underlying structure of the steps was rebuilt and the granite pieces disassembled and rebuilt in 2002.

The center section's five bays contain recessed window groups framed by Bedford stone. The decorative pattern includes fluting along the outer edges and Art Deco designs in the spandrels between the each level. The patterns culminate in stylized eagle designs in each of the lintels above the third floor windows. The vertical window bands in the outer bays have a similar vertical stone edging but brickwork in place of the stone spandrels and lintels. The building has a simple molded coping and no decorative cornice. When originally constructed, tall metal lettering (likely bronze) was positioned along the center section and read "Floyd" with the balance of building name applied in bronze lettering to the front wall in the area above the three center bays reading "County Court House." The projecting lettering was removed between 1964 and 1965 due to roof leaks associated with the design of the metal parapet to which the lettering was attached. The applied lettering remains as originally designed.

The dramatic front entrance surround is a continuation of the red granite steps and foundation stone found in the balance of the center section. Constructed of polished granite, the slightly curved surround includes wide side pieces with distinct horizontal joints and a stepped positioning of the stones in terms of both height and depth. The entrance doors are deeply recessed beneath a tall stone spandrel that contains a map of Floyd County cut in the stone. Fluted stone scrolls are placed to either side of the spandrel with the words "Floyd County" inscribed along the lower edge of the county stone. The paired metal doors are original, each with an asymmetrical arrangement of window lights. The transom contains a metal grill with an Art Deco pattern similar to the design of the window spandrels found in the balance of the front façade.

The principal change made to the front façade has been the installation of replacement windows in 1980. The new windows are fabricated of aluminum with a combination of double-hung sash and fixed metal infill panels. Since only portions of the courthouse are cooled with central air conditioning, the transom panels frequently contain room air conditioning units.

**Side elevations:** On the southwest and northeast elevations, the courthouse has five bays with a height of four stories. On the southwest façade, the basement level is accessed through a set of below-grade concrete stairs in the center bay. The steps retain their original decorative wrought iron balustrade with a geometric circle and bar design. A pair of original metal doors with five horizontal lights leads to the central corridor. The vertical window bands in each of the bays match those of the outer bays in the front façade with a vertical stone edging and brickwork in the spandrels. Window placement reflects the interior floor plan with openings included in all bays of five levels except on the first floor where only the center bay has a window due to the position of working vaults. The opposite end of the building facing the Cedar River is identical except for differences resulting from terrain changes. Here, the downward slope leaves the basement level fully exposed

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and the center entrance opening at ground level.

**Rear elevation:** The rear or northwest elevation faces South Jackson Street. Brick walls and Bedford stone trim match that of the balance of the building. Granite steps set between sold limestone blocks lead to the rear entrance. The entrance surround is a continuation of the foundation's limestone facing with fluted stones flanking the building date of 1940 above the opening's single door and sidelights. The arrangement of openings on the rear façade relates to utilitarian needs of the interior and as a result is divided into eleven narrower bays to accommodate a greater number of window openings. Openings in the center bay contain a material used in the building's interior – glass block. Landing-level windows between the first and second and between the second the third floors are filled with this material for its "modern" design statement. The rear façade's straightforward symmetry is disturbed only at the basement level where a pair of garage openings filled with fiberglass overhead doors is positioned at the north end.

**Interior Floor Plan:** The Floyd County Court House has a central corridor plan similar to those of the other nine PWA-Era Courthouses in Iowa. The front and rear entrances located midway along the northwest and southeast façades open into entrance vestibules set between the basement and first floor. On the interior, these vestibules are set perpendicular to the central corridor that runs the full length of the building. Individual county offices outfitted to meet the needs of specific county functions open onto the public corridors on the first and second floors. Circulation between floors in the courthouse is via the central staircase located opposite the front entrance vestibule and the secondary staircases located in the west and east corners of the building. An elevator was included in the original plan and is located on the east side of the north corridor. The district courtroom and related judicial services are located on the third floor and the county jail on the fourth floor. Design elements and finishes for the most important spaces in the courthouse are discussed in greater detail below.

**Entrance vestibules:** The front entrance vestibule has a terrazzo floor composed of black, rose and gray rock pieces laid in large squares with brass dividers. The walls are clad in polished gray marble from the floor to ceiling with fluted pilasters setting off commemorative inscriptions. A pair of horizontal metal ventilation covers with geometric patterns is mounted near the base of one wall. The smoothly plastered ceiling has a single, flush-mounted cylindrical light fixture with an opaque white glass shade. A half-flight of stairs leads to an upper landing and a second set of metal doors each containing five horizontal lights. Gray marble wainscoting approximately 5 feet tall continues along the entrance corridor, curving at the corners where it meets the central corridor.

The rear entrance vestibule opens midway between the first floor and basement forming a landing at the rear of the central staircase. The rear entrance vestibule floor is terrazzo with tall marble wainscoting on the walls. A doublewide stair leads to the basement and doors on either side lead to the central corridor. Each opening contains an original metal door with five horizontal lights. Inside these doors, a short flight of stairs leads to the central corridor where the intersecting walls have curved corners.

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**Public corridors:** Throughout the building, the central corridors have the same gray, rose and black chip terrazzo floor laid in large squares. Tall gray marble lining the walls is set on a short terrazzo base, the marble divided into a tall panel with a narrow horizontal top piece, the total height measuring approximately 60 inches. Smooth finished plaster covers the upper walls and acoustic tile installed in 1974 cover the lowered ceilings, the heights of which vary between floors. Recessed fluorescent lights and flush mounted ceiling fans line the lowered corridor ceilings.

Entrances onto the central corridors are set in recessed openings with nearly all in their original locations. Transoms are used over corridor openings on the second floor where ceiling height is higher. Single-light metal doors (upper half-lights or full-length lights) fill most openings. Recessed areas for drinking fountains are lined with marble matching the wainscoting. Glass block is used in several areas where its purpose is to conduct light into the central corridor and at the same time offer a modern design statement. Glass blocked openings include both of the secondary stairs, the old supervisor's office on the second floor, and the wall at the end of the north corridor on the first floor. The south end of the first corridor has been modified with the addition of a wood paneled clad wall and new wood door.

**County offices:** Each of the county offices originally contained a service counter at which public business was transacted. This was located inside the corridor door with a public lobby in front of the counter and a staff work area to the rear of the counter. Storage or working vaults remain in many of the offices although the fireproof aspects of these areas (exterior window closures and operable doors) are not always in use. In some cases, internal circulation hallways, restrooms, meeting rooms, conference rooms, and storage areas are also included in the county offices. Staircases located in the northeast and southwest corners of the building are designed for employee use. Walls in the office areas are plastered with lowered acoustic tiled ceilings installed in the mid-1970s in place throughout. Flooring is a combination of original asphalt tile and carpeting (first installed in early 1970s).

**Central staircase:** The central staircase is located just inside the rear entrance opposite the front entrance corridor. The staircase features a central, double-wide run leading up to a wide landing between flights with return runs along the walls leading from the main landing to the second floor. This pattern is repeated between the second and third floors. From the first floor, the short runs along the walls lead down to a landing, part of which also serves as the rear vestibule. From here a central run extends down into the basement level. The treads and risers are made of matching terrazzo. The outer walls of the staircase are lined in tall gray marble and the closed balustrade is clad in the same material. A continuous brass handrail sits on top of the balustrade connecting a double flight of stairs. Oversize windows at the landings provide abundant light for the first, second and third floor corridors. Narrow, horizontal metal radiator covers with a geometric design are set beneath the windows on each landing.

**Courtroom:** The most important space aesthetically and functionally in a courthouse is frequently the courtroom. The Floyd County Court House courtroom is located on the third floor facing the



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front of the building (southeast). It is accessed off the central corridor through a pair of flush metal doors, each with a small circular window, located near the rear wall. The doors' original dark brown grained finish survives and may be an indication of how other metal doors in the courthouse were originally finished. The front of the courtroom faces southwest with the jury box on the right and the judge's bench centered on the front wall. The courtroom has its original dimensions (approximately 56 feet by 32 feet) including its two-story ceiling height and nearly all of its original wood components. The floors were originally covered in asphalt tile, which survives in the spectator seating area. The balance of the courtroom is carpeted (date unknown). The ceilings are covered in acoustic tile (replaced in 1986) fashioned in a series of shallow boxed cornices. Fluorescent panel lights (non-original) are mounted along four sides of the boxed cornices replacing earlier incandescent fixtures.

The courtroom's wood components were manufactured by the Klise Manufacturing Company of Grand Rapids, Michigan.<sup>2</sup> The walls are covered in walnut paneling from floor to ceiling with bronze spacers to delineate important vertical breaks. A wide cornice made of several wide bands and molding styles rings the perimeter of the room. The primary molding style is pattern D-1629 taken from the company's 1930 catalog and reproduced in a facsimile of the catalog in 1987. Centered on the front wall between bronze spacers is a large scale of justice fashioned of inlay wood species. A decorative mid-rail molding is set at the height of the window stools approximately 5 feet from the floor. The design of the molding includes a geometric, diagonal arrow pattern with several wood species also fashioned as inlay to create the design. A half-width band of the same materials set in a similar pattern is used as the finish molding along the upper edge of judge's bench, jury box, and witness stand.

The courtroom seating in the north half of the room is organized theater style with a center aisle and two side aisles. The bar separating the spectator area from the counsel tables is covered in walnut paneling with vertical bronze separators and a finish molding in the same style as the judge's bench. The metal gate has been removed to satisfy accessibility requirements. Six rows of pew-style benches are set behind the bar on either side of the aisle with a single, doublewide pew placed against the rear wall in a recessed alcove. Each walnut pew has a low curved back with the ends trimmed with sections of molding that match portions of moldings used in other courtroom components. Counsel tables, attorney chairs, and juror chairs are all original furnishings. Metal grills in the courtroom are in two styles. Large square grills with a geometric pattern flank the rear alcove. Narrow horizontal grills applied over recessed radiators beneath each of the windows match the grills installed in the front vestibule and on the main staircase landings.

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<sup>2</sup>The Klise Manufacturing Company was founded in 1910 by John Klise, who consolidated a number of small wood carving shops in Grand Rapids, Michigan, to form what was then the "largest manufacturer of carved wood mouldings in the United States." The company survived the Great Depression and did considerable work for the U.S. during World War II. The company continues as manufacturer of custom fabricated mouldings for diverse uses in 2003. From: [www.klisemfg.com/AboutK.htm](http://www.klisemfg.com/AboutK.htm), accessed 1/11/03. Molding profiles appear in "The Book of Carved Wood Decoration." Grand Rapids, Michigan: Klise Manufacturing Company, 1987. (a facsimile reproduction of the 1930 catalog)

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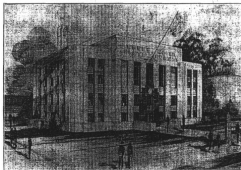
The judge's chambers, court reporter office, law library, jury room, and other court related offices are located at the south end of the building and are accessed through flush metal doors (original grained finish) located to either side of the judge's bench.

**Floor plan:** The principal county offices for the Floyd County Court House are located on the first and second floors with additional storage, garage space, and utility areas on the basement. Three staircases provide circulation between floors. The first floor included a large public assembly room, an office and library for the county superintendent, and offices for the county engineer, old age assistance department, and sheriff. The second floor contained offices for the board of supervisors (above the front entrance), the recorder, auditor, clerk, and treasurer, all with associated vaults.

The third floor contained the courtroom across the center of the front, the grand jury room, attorney room and a waiting room in the east corner; the jury dormitory space, bailiff's office, and restrooms in the north corner; another attorney room, witness room and jury deliberation room in the west corner; and law library, reporter's office, judge's chambers in the south corner. The fourth floor was reserved for the county jail and sheriff's residence. The laundry and administrative offices for the sheriff and deputies were originally located in the south third of the floor. The cellblock containing sections for men, women, and juvenile prisoners faced the southwest. The sheriff's three-bedroom apartment and jail kitchen were located in the north third of the floor. The upper level of the courtroom extends into the fourth floor across the front of the building.

During the sixty-year life of the courthouse, a series of small to medium sized, phased remodelings have taken place. A number of changes were based on the obsolescence of certain county activities (the county school superintendent's office, the sheriff's residence, and dormitory space for jurors). A proposed drawing for the courthouse prepared prior to the 1938 referendum appears below.<sup>3</sup>

PROPOSED NEW COURT HOUSE



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**Summary of contributing and non-contributing resources:**

All historic resources associated with the courthouse were evaluated according to rules set forth in *National Register Bulletin 16A, How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* (1991). The evaluation was made according to procedures further specified in Section F.v. "Individually Eligible Properties," p. 47 of the PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa MPD. A summary follows.

- 1 Contributing Building: courthouse
- 1 Contributing Site: courthouse site
- 1 Non-contributing Object: flagpole

**Summary of alterations:**

- Fluorescent courtroom lights installed, 1956
- Parapet sign removed, ca. 1965
- Electrical improvements, 1972
- Ceilings lowered in corridors, 1974
- Masonry repairs on all façades, 1975, 1979, 1980, 1986, 1987, 1988, and 1993
- New aluminum windows, 1980
- New roof, 1985
- Courtroom acoustic tile ceiling replaced with new tile, 1986
- Fourth floor jail areas and sheriff's department offices remodeled, 1992
- Rebuild/restore front entrance steps, 2002
- Courtroom carpeting, undated

The changes made to the Floyd County Court House are consistent with the registration requirements set forth under Section F.iv.c of the "PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa" MPD, pp. F45-F48. Exterior changes have had a minimal impact on the building's historic features. Removal of the parapet sign in the mid-1960s came after a protracted effort to repair leaks associated with its design. Masonry problems were handled as phased repairs where sections of brick were removed, relayed, or pointed. The most significant change involved installation of new windows. This work was done in such a manner that original opening sizes were retained.

Most of the interior changes in the Floyd County Court House have involved the installation of updated mechanical systems, redecorating, and internal office subdivision. Lowered ceilings and changes in finishes are the most frequent changes in the public corridors. The courtroom has seen relatively few changes and the impact of such things as new ceiling tile and carpeting minimal.

Like many other PWA-Era courthouses, a number of changes have been made to courthouse jail space. Discontinuation of the sheriff's apartment has provided more space for expanded administrative needs.

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<sup>3</sup>"Proposed New Court House," *Charles City Press* (Charles City, Iowa), September 1938.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

The Floyd County Court House is significant under Criteria A and C as one of ten county courthouses built in Iowa during the New Deal Era. As the last courthouse erected during the pre-World War II period, its construction *without* federal PWA assistance sets it apart from the nine other courthouses. Designed by Hansen and Waggoner of Mason City, an important northern Iowa architectural firm, it is an example of the PWA Moderne style of public building architecture developed during the 1930s and early 1940s. Its design blends Art Deco and Moderne style elements with the utilitarian advantages of modern office building construction. Nomination of the Floyd County Court House is consistent with the registration requirements set forth in the Section F of the "PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa" MPD.

***Historical Background:***

***i. New Deal Era and the Public Works Administration:***

In June 1933 near the end of Franklin Roosevelt's first one hundred days in office, Congress passed the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) creating two important federal initiatives designed to combat the Depression. The National Recovery Administration or NRA was established to set up code agreements with private industries that would encourage greater employment and at the same time, regulate wages and affirm union organizing. The other new agency was intended to serve an emergency role hence the name, Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works. A short time later, President Franklin Roosevelt appointed General Hugh Johnson to head the NRA. During the next two years it would have a fractious history until the Supreme Court struck it down in May 1935.

Roosevelt's second initiative on behalf of industrial workers was intended to serve as an emergency program that would soon outlive its useful life.<sup>4</sup> He appointed his good friend Harry Hopkins to head the newly established Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and Civil Works Administration (CWA). Responsibilities for the new Public Works Administration (PWA) were assigned to Harold Ickes, Roosevelt's fiscally conservative Secretary of the Interior. The following year the CWA efforts were also transferred to Ickes. Under their direction a series of federal undertakings were given form and substance. Management structures were created, distribution systems organized, administrative practices reorganized, and funding set in motion. By June 1934, Ickes had overseen expenditure of \$3.3 billion to 13,266 federal projects and 2,407 non-federal projects. The popular federal program would see a series of successive appropriations continue for nearly a decade until the PWA was dismantled in 1943. It is this aspect of the NIRA that comprises the balance of this discussion.

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<sup>4</sup>Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Roosevelt: The Coming of the New Deal* (Boston, 1959), p. 104 as quoted in Lisa B. Reitzes, "Moderately Modern: Interpreting the Architecture of the Public Works Administration, Volume II," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Delaware, May 1989, p. 370.

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It is not surprising that the first public works projects to be funded through the FERA were for federal agencies. The Federal Employment Stabilization Board created in 1931 was responsible for establishing a six-year program of federal construction projects. However, under President Hoover's administration that was as far as the planning had gone. Now, with federal funding in place, many of these construction initiatives were ready to move forward. As a result, Washington, D.C. was among the first cities to benefit from the demand for both skilled and unskilled workers created by these federal programs.

The other part of the NIRA was intended to stimulate non-federal projects where the national government would serve as a partner with states, local communities, schools, and other non-governmental groups. For these projects to get off the ground, considerable planning would have to take place first. Soon after FERA was established, each state was asked to establish an advisory board with three members. Their purpose would be to stimulate applications for the non-federal funds, forward reports to Washington, and handle requests for funds once they were received. These boards were criticized and by February 1934 were discontinued.<sup>5</sup>

State level offices staffed by federal employees soon replaced the state boards. These offices were headed by "state engineers" and despite their titles, their responsibility was to the federal government. In a major effort at decentralization, legal, engineering, and financing experts were transferred from Washington to the State Engineer offices. Over time, there were problems with these offices as well. Their titles lead to confusion as local officials sought to learn how to apply for federal assistance and were unclear as to whether the "State Engineer" was a promoter or administrator.

Despite these problems, Congressional appropriations continued annually, each year accompanied by mandated changes in the operation of the PWA program. Among the most important were provisions in the Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 that allowed the federal share of PWA projects to be increased from 30 percent to 45 percent. Another provision allowed the grants to cover the cost of architects and engineers, acquisition of necessary land, legal fees, and administrative costs. By including these costs, more localities were able to participate and the quality of projects was enhanced. An executive order issued by President Roosevelt added the requirement that prevailing wage rates be observed on PWA projects.

When the 1936 appropriation bill came up the following year, Congress expressed its continuing concern for the large numbers of unemployed Americans by enacting new measures in the PWA designed to accelerate the expenditure of PWA funds. Historian Lisa Reitzes summarized the conflict:

...it was widely agreed that, for the PWA to have a visible effect on unemployment and poverty, it needed to move quickly on labor-intensive projects; but Ickes insisted that to

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<sup>5</sup>Jack F. Isakoff, "The Public Works Administration," *University of Illinois Bulletin*, Volume XXXVI, (November 18, 1938), p. 36.

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produce permanent useful public works whose execution would be economical and free from scandal, the PWA had to move slowly and apply strict standards for inclusion in the program...many in the government believed that the PWA needed to dictate what and where projects were undertaken; however, to enlist local support and ensure the "usefulness" of public works projects, many felt that distribution of PWA funds and designation of construction priorities needed to be guided by local decisions.<sup>6</sup>

In the end, Congress prevailed seeking to increase the ranks of the employed by speeding up spending on PWA projects. Setting an aggressive timetable for completion of projects did this.

The following year, Congressional sentiment shifted again. Funding under the PWA Extension Act of 1937 was drastically cut and July 1, 1939 set as the date for completion of all projects. The PWA's administrative staff was cut as it moved towards "liquidation" with state offices among the first to be shut down. Although seven regional offices, each with three or more states, had been in place since early in the life of the PWA, they had not had major responsibilities for project oversight.

This changed in the fall of 1937 as the state PWA offices closed. Thereafter, all grant applications, approvals, bidding and contracting, monitoring of wage scales, correspondence, payments, and auditing would flow through the regional offices. Though final authority remained in Washington, the day-to-day management of the PWA shifted to the regional offices. Iowa was one of eight states included in Region No. 4 headquartered in Omaha. Other states in Region No. 4 included Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Missouri. The other regional offices were headquartered in New York, Atlanta, Chicago, Fort Worth, San Francisco, and Portland.

By June 1938 with liquidation measures well underway, Congress reversed itself again. Measures to shut down the PWA were temporarily halted and a new appropriation of nearly \$1 billion was authorized. To keep the money flowing as quickly as possible, the appropriation law specified that new projects must be completed by July 1940.

In early 1939 a series of government publications appeared describing the story of the PWA. Some were designed to respond to criticism of the PWA and others were published to document for posterity the success of this experiment in public works construction. *The Story of PWA* came out in the spring of 1939, the lengthy *Public Buildings: A Survey of Architecture of Projects Constructed by Federal and other Governmental Bodies between the Years 1933 and 1939 with the Assistance of the Public Works Administration* came out later that year, and *America Builds the Record of PWA* came out before year's end.

The PWA officially ended in July 1939 as the focus of the Administration began to shift toward

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<sup>6</sup>Lisa B. Reitzes, "Moderately Modern: Interpreting the Architecture of the Public Works Administration, Volume II," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Delaware, May 1989, p.372-373.

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readying for war. President Roosevelt's reorganization plan consolidated the efforts of a number of the "alphabet agencies" under the umbrella of the Federal Works Agency (FWA). It absorbed not only the PWA but also the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Supervising Architect's Office in the Treasury Department (responsible for post office construction), and the U.S. Housing Authority. John M. Carmody was selected to head the new agency. The regional offices continued to operate until 1943 with Iowa projects still in the pipeline managed through the Omaha office through 1941.

**ii. *The PWA at Work in Iowa: County Courthouse Building (1934-1941):***

Establishment of the Public Works Administration in June 1933 prompted formation of a network of 48 state PWA offices. There was no precedent to guide the federal-state-local partnership resulting in considerable time spent during the first months in simply setting up the state offices. Communities were not prepared to respond quickly to a call for PWA projects and as a result, the federal government turned to two other programs to speed federal money into the pipeline – the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the short-lived Civil Works Administration (CWA).

Meanwhile it became clear that antiquated municipal and county laws governing public building and the poor credit ratings of many cities and counties in the wake of bond failures would further prohibit a prompt set of applications. The PWA responded by sending financing and legal experts to states to assist in drafting new state enabling legislation and arranging for federal loan guarantees. Although no history of Iowa's State PWA Office has been written, it is likely that similar problems and responses were experienced there. The acting state director of Iowa's PWA Office by the time the first county courthouse was being planned in Cass County was P.F. Hopkins.<sup>7</sup> Based on the correspondence record from that office, it appears that he continued in that capacity throughout the office's life.

The process of selecting PWA projects would be the same in Iowa as in other states. Initially applicants would be able to apply for grants amounting to up to 30 percent of the project's costs. Funding could be used for labor and materials but not for project management, architectural and engineering fees, and land acquisition. There would be five "yardsticks" by which local projects would be measured:

1. The social desirability of the project and its relation to coordinated planning.
2. The economic desirability; that is its relation to unemployment and the revival of industry.
3. The soundness of the project from engineering and technical standpoints.
4. The financial ability of the applicant to complete the work and "reasonably secure" any loans by the United States.
5. The legal collectibility of the securities to be purchased or the enforceability of

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<sup>7</sup>P.F. Hopkins' familial relationship, if any, to PWA Administrator Harry Hopkins is unknown.

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any lease entered into.<sup>8</sup>

In the case of county courthouses, the application would need to be submitted by the county board of supervisors with the actual applications usually prepared by the county auditor. In some Iowa counties, courthouses had been under discussion for years. In the case of Jones County, space for county offices and a courtroom was maintained in rented quarters for more than six decades prior to the completion of the new Jones County Court House in 1937. In Bremer County, the county offices and courtroom were housed in seven buildings including the 1857 courthouse, three banks, and above a hardware store. In the case of three counties, multiple referenda were held to consider building a new courthouse. One unique example involved the Cass County Court House in Atlantic. After a fire destroyed the old courthouse in 1932, a referendum vote was scheduled two months later. Faced with grim economic conditions voters turned down the referendum by a substantial margin. By the time the second vote was held, a citizens group had prompted the board of supervisors to apply for a PWA grant to underwrite a portion of the costs. After the second referendum was held year later, local officials were certain that the availability of a PWA grant had contributed to its passage. In several cases in Iowa when courthouse referenda votes were held in conjunction with a general election they failed. Passage appears to have been more likely when scheduled as part of a special election.

It was necessary for a PWA applicant to provide considerable information about their intended project. The only surviving application for a county courthouse in Iowa is believed to be the application prepared for the Jones County Court House in Anamosa in 1935. It is likely that it was typical of other applications filed. It contained the following:

- a general description of the project
- a statement regarding the status of drawings and specifications
- a breakdown of labor expenses by category of worker, amount, and percentage of grant allotment
- a breakdown of expenses for superintendence, architects, and engineers
- a breakdown of expense for land, materials, equipment, and contingent expenses
- a list of skilled laborers by specific trade and number to be employed
- estimated average worker yearly wage
- estimated total number of man-hours
- estimated daily average number of employees each month for term of the project
- a statement regarding source of other funds and statutory authority to undertake project
- a copy of the application resolution by the board of supervisors
- supplemental information regarding outstanding bonds, borrowing capacity, county

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<sup>8</sup>*America Builds. The Record of PWA. Public Works Administration. Prepared in the Division of Information by the United States, Public Works Administration. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939.*



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population, and assessed valuation<sup>9</sup>

To answer these questions, an applicant-county would need to have preliminary cost estimates in hand. It would be impossible to determine the overall cost figure or any of the breakdowns required in the application without first having a general building plan in hand. To do this it appears that several architectural firms in Iowa were prepared to work for little or no fee during this first phase. In courthouses where Keffer & Jones of Des Moines were involved, the firm signed a contract stipulating that no fee would be charged until the PWA grant was approved and the bonds sold. Their services were limited to preliminary sketches until that time.<sup>10</sup>

The willingness of an architectural firm to work with a county in such a manner allowed two things. First, it enabled the county to prepare an application and respond in an educated manner to the questions posed by federal reviewers. Second, it gave the board of supervisors a building concept and design to promote during the referendum process. If the grants were awarded and the county's voters approved, the architect who had supported the local efforts was likely to secure the design services contract.

Once a PWA application was approved at the state, regional, and national levels, the board of supervisors moved to the next step – the referendum campaign. In virtually every county in the Iowa, these campaigns looked the same. A citizens committee, either formal or informal, undertook a public information campaign to persuade voters of the merits of building a courthouse with the help of a PWA grant. Presentations were given by members of the committee or the board of supervisors to civic organizations. Using the front pages of the local newspapers, articles appeared regularly touting the merit of grants that would underwrite 45 percent of the cost. Voters were encouraged to think themselves fortunate to be able to get more courthouse than their tax dollars would normally buy.

An example of such a campaign was seen on the front pages of the *Indianola Record* in 1936 and 1937. During the summer of 1936 the Warren County Federated Women's Clubs had the courthouse as part of their quarterly meeting. Following the meeting the *Indianola Record* carried an extensive article with the opinions of various members, both pro and con, cited. The newspaper carried similar articles when the Indianola Chamber of Commerce considered it on its several months later. The opinions of those who favored the new courthouse were best summarized in the comments of one Warren County woman when she said that "she had always been taught to take a piece of pie when it was passed to her. She was heartily in favor of constructing a new courthouse now when the county can get a \$145,000 building for \$80,000."<sup>11</sup> The referendum vote was held in conjunction with the general election in 1936 and failed. Two years later at a special election

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<sup>9</sup>Application for Grant, Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, PWA Form No. 175 for Court House for Jones County," dated July 5, 1935, on file in Auditor's Office, Jones County Court House, Anamosa, Iowa.

<sup>10</sup>Agreement between Architects and Owners, for Court House for Audubon County," dated July 29, 1938, on file in Auditor's Office, Audubon County Court House, Audubon, Iowa.

<sup>11</sup>"Women's Clubs Talk Building a Courthouse," *Indianola Record*, (Indianola, Iowa), July, 1936.

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following a continuing campaign by promoters, the measure passed.

Other pro-courthouse campaign messages stressed the need for a new courthouse to keep records safe. In Cass County, a referendum information pamphlet made the case for approval by pointing out that in Douglas County, Nebraska the county had spent nearly \$300,000 to recreate records lost or damaged in a fire. When Jones County began to make a case for its courthouse in 1935 it contacted Cass County's auditor who happily shared a copy of the information pamphlet.<sup>12</sup>

A third reason frequently given for erecting a courthouse in the midst of a national economic depression related to the cost of bonds. Architect Karl Keffer combined all of these arguments when he spoke to the Audubon Board of Supervisors in August 1938. He said that the "primary reason Audubon County should have a new courthouse is because county records are not safe in case of fire in the present building. The secondary reason is that it would be to the county's financial advantage not only to secure the government grant but to take advantage of present low interest rates county bonds carry."<sup>13</sup> Keffer's assessment of bond rates proved prophetic when the county was able to secure a favorable rate of just 1¼ percent later that year. This rate was less than half that paid four years earlier in Cass County.

Soon, the success of one PWA-funded courthouse encouraged other counties to undertake the application process. By the time Warren County voters were asked to consider approving a referendum the second time, the *Indianola Tribune* was able to feature photographs of three completed buildings – two were completed with PWA grants in Jones and Cass counties while a third, much smaller building, was erected before the PWA was available in Ringgold County.<sup>14</sup>

The first county to successfully complete the application, referendum, and courthouse construction process was Cass County in southwest Iowa in 1934. Both Governor Clyde Herring and Lieutenant Governor N. C. Kraschel were on hand for the cornerstone ceremony in March 1934 when 1,200 Atlantic school children turned out to greet them. Groundbreaking ceremonies, cornerstone laying events, courtroom dedications, and courthouse openings were celebrated with parades, keynote speakers, and historical pageants. In most communities completion of the courthouses was viewed as an opportunity to pass the torch from one generation to another and the county's old settlers were given special honors. In all but the last several courthouse completions community boosters used these events to look to better times ahead.

A chronological list of PWA-Era courthouses completed between 1934 and 1941 appears on the following page. All received federal assistance except the Floyd County Court House, which was denied funding when the federal appropriation available for the state ran out.

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<sup>12</sup>"Suggest for the New Court House for Cass County," prepared by the Board of Supervisors of Cass County, Iowa for November 8, 1932 referendum, on file in Auditor's Office, Jones County Court House, Anamosa, Iowa.

<sup>13</sup>"PWA Grant for Court House is Asked by Board," *The Advocate-Republican*, (Audubon, Iowa), August 4, 1938.

<sup>14</sup>"County Board Reserves Right to Reject Any and All Architectural Plans for Courthouse," *Indianola Tribune*, (Indianola, Iowa), August 3, 1938.

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**Figure 2: Chronological List of PWA-Era Courthouses, 1934-1941**

County/City Federal Project #	Year Completed	Architect	General Contractor	Original Cost <sup>15</sup>
Cass Co., Atlantic Federal Public Works Project No. 1410	1934	Dougher, Rich & Woodburn, Des Moines, Iowa	C.C. Larsen Co., Council Bluffs, Iowa	\$130,000
Bremer Co., Waverly P.W.A. Docket IA 1338-R	1937	Mortimer Cleveland, Waterloo, Iowa	Drape Construction Co., Tripoli, Iowa	\$135,000
Jones Co., Anamosa P.W.A. Docket IA 1068-R	1937	Dougher, Rich & Woodburn, Des Moines, Iowa	C.C. Larsen & Sons Co., Council Bluffs, Iowa	\$200,000
Humboldt Co., Dakota City P.W.A. Docket IA 1351-DS	1939	Dougher, Rich & Woodburn, Des Moines, Iowa	Holtze Construction Co., Sioux City, Iowa	\$185,000
Warren Co., Indianola P.W.A. Docket IA 1290-F	1939	Keffer & Jones, Des Moines, Iowa	F.B. Dickinson & Co., Des Moines, Iowa	\$145,000
Audubon Co., Audubon P.W.A. Docket IA 1586-F	1939	Keffer & Jones, Des Moines, Iowa	J.C. Mayer, Clarion, Iowa	\$133,000
Buchanan Co., Independence P.W.A. Docket IA 1447-F	1940	Dougher, Rich & Woodburn, Des Moines, Iowa	C.C. Larsen & Sons Co., Council Bluffs, Iowa	\$254,000
Des Moines Co., Burlington P.W.A. Docket IA 1529-F	1940	Keffer & Jones, Des Moines, Iowa	Paul Steenberg Construction Co., St. Paul, Minnesota	\$280,000
Allamakee Co., Waukon Federal project # unknown	1940	Charles Aitfillisch, Decorah, Iowa	Rye & Henkel, Mason City, Iowa	\$202,000
Floyd Co., Charles City Not funded with PWA assistance	1941	Hansen & Waggoner, Mason City, Iowa	James Thompson & Sons, Ames, Iowa	\$265,000

**iii. Building the Floyd County Court House:**

The first county seat of Floyd County was established in 1854 in Charles City, known as St. Charles at the time. Construction on the first courthouse in Charles City began in 1857. Before the year was out, a county seat contest developed with voters affirming the town of Floyd, a more geographically centered county seat, over Charles City. Debate continued with temporary locations used for county offices until the Iowa Supreme Court reestablished Charles City as the county seat in 1859. The courthouse begun in 1857 was completed in 1861 and served the county until a fire destroyed the building in 1881. A brief county seat debate resumed but electors again approved Charles City. A new courthouse was erected the same year.

Population in Floyd County grew steadily from 14,677 in 1880 to 19,524 by 1930. The next decade

<sup>15</sup>Original cost figures include all expenses for completion of the courthouse including site acquisition if applicable, architectural fees, excavation, general contract, subcontracts, furnishings and equipment, and landscaping. Cost figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.

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saw population continue to rise modestly to 20,169. During this period the change in national leadership in 1933 saw the creation of a series of federal programs designed to combat the Great Depression. Among the most active programs to find their way to the county level were the Public Works Administration (PWA), the Works Progress Administration (WPA), and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). No comprehensive list of projects is available for Floyd County with the only WPA project documented in the State Historical Society's WPA Photograph Collection a riverfront project in Charles City. Other federal dollars flowed to state and federal highway construction projects in Floyd County.

As experience of other Iowa counties with the PWA program accumulated, the board of supervisors in Floyd County was persuaded to make application for a grant to assist in replacing the 1881 courthouse. Serious concerns had been voiced about the dilapidated condition of the current building and the safety of public records. The board retained architects Harry Hansen and Karl Waggoner of Mason City in 1938 to design the new building. An application for \$90,000 covering 45 percent of the estimated \$200,000 cost was submitted that summer. At the same time, a public campaign to secure voter approval for the sale of \$110,000 in bonds was launched. On September 23, 1938 Floyd County voters approved the courthouse referendum by a wide margin.

Submittal of the county's application came too late, however. The PWA program was in the process of closing down following the failure of Congress to reauthorize the program with a new appropriation. The last courthouse to be funded in the state in Allamakee County had its application in the pipeline prior to Floyd County and approved its referendum just one day before voters in Floyd County affirmed bonding for the project.

County leaders went back to the drawing board in the wake of the grant's denial. According to newspaper accounts, temporary efforts were made to repair the most serious problems in the building. Iron rods were installed to stabilize walls but cracks continued to appear with several instances of falling plaster recorded on the building's interior. Finally, with conditions of the courthouse continuing to worsen, the four district court judges addressed a joint letter to the people of Floyd County on the pages of the *Charles City Press*. The judges warned of the seriousness of the situation and the danger posed to public records. The newspaper took a similar position, deeming the courthouse a "hazard to both the records, the employees and the public."<sup>16</sup> It was officially condemned in 1939.

On March 25, 1940 a second referendum to build a new courthouse *without* benefit of a PWA grant was approved by voters by a margin of only a few percentage points less than the referendum two years earlier. This approval came despite the fact that because there would be no PWA funding, the referendum had a price tag more than double the cost of the previous one or \$240,000.

Following approval of the referendum, the board of supervisors had to decide where the courthouse

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<sup>16</sup>"Court House Wins Out by 70%; \$240,000 Bond Issue Voted by Floyd County," *Charles City Press*, (Charles City, Iowa), March 25, 1940.

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would be erected. On a close board vote in April 1940, the decision was made to put the new building on the same site as the old building. This decision required that the county offices be temporarily relocated from the old courthouse. The move took place over the next several months and the old courthouse was razed during the summer of 1940. Meanwhile, members of the board of supervisors planned trips to visit other new courthouse buildings in the state. Hansen and Waggoner's drawings for the building were finalized July 10, 1940 and bids were let a short time later. The general contract was awarded to James Thompson and Sons of Ames, Iowa with low bids for mechanical systems going to the Wheatland Company and Pratt Electric Company.

Ground was officially broken for the new building on August 15, 1940, and the cornerstone was laid the following October 19, 1940 during special ceremonies. A parade was held from the downtown to the courthouse square with bands from throughout the county participating. Speeches were given by County Attorney Weston Jones, Judge M.F. Edwards, and Charles City School Superintendent P.C. Lapham who described the courthouse as a "fortress of the form of government in which we believe."<sup>17</sup> A large copper box containing dozens of items commemorating aspects of Floyd County's past and present was placed in the cornerstone.

Steady progress was made through the winter months despite the weather and by February the walls for the building's four stories were poured and faced and a roof in place. County offices moved into the completed building the following September as it was completed and furnished ahead of schedule in less than twelve months.

The Floyd County Court House was formally dedicated on October 10, 1941 with Iowa Governor George Wilson on hand as the main speaker. Newspaper accounts indicate that the governor was quick to praise local citizens for the courage they demonstrated in building their courthouse without federal aid, saying:

"Would that this spirit should prevail everywhere and at all times, for it would go far toward solving the major problems that have grown up... You have built this courthouse without sending a committee to some far off place to rap a supposedly unlimited treasury for funds to buy the bricks and pay the workmen. You might have gotten an additional ornament at the eaves or another rail at the bar of the court; but you are entitled to solid satisfaction in that you belong to the pay-as-you-go brigade."<sup>18</sup>

In the years that followed Floyd County residents took great pride in the fact that their \$265,000 courthouse, though begun as a PWA project, ended up being funded exclusively by county taxpayers.

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<sup>17</sup>"Large Crowd Attends the Ceremony," *Charles City Press*, (Charles City, Iowa), October 21, 1940, pp. 1 & 6.

<sup>18</sup>"New Court House Dedicated; Gov. Wilson Gives Praise to Floyd Co.," *Charles City Press*, (Charles City, Iowa), October 10, 1941.

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**Floyd County Court House during construction,  
rear and southwest façades (looking northeast), February 1940<sup>19</sup>**



One of the most succinct summaries of the local historical significance of any of the PWA-Era Courthouse appeared in the *Charles City Press* in its Centennial Issue on October 13, 1969. The issue came out 18 months after a disastrous tornado hit downtown Charles City but left the courthouse untouched. In describing the importance of the current Floyd County Court House and its predecessors to the community, the author wrote the following:

Few buildings claim the historical, sorrowful, tragic and humorous events that the Floyd County Courthouses have claimed through the years here at Charles City. There was the fierce battle over the location of the county seat; the tragic scenes when Civil War volunteers marched up to sign their names with mothers, wives, and sweethearts watching tearfully;

<sup>19</sup>Floyd County Court House (historic photograph), dated February 3, 1941, Floyd County Auditor's Office.

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traveling entertainers who attracted such crowds that only the courtroom could hold them; murder trials so celebrated that people brought their lunches to keep their seats; settlements involving money, property, and domestic problems; and political battles. Here we keep the records of births, deaths, contracts, and wills. The Floyd County Courthouses have been closely associated with the local life of Charles City residents.<sup>20</sup>

**iv. Architectural significance:**

The Floyd County Court House was designed by the architectural firm of Hansen & Waggoner of Mason City, Iowa. Harry P. Hansen (1889-1955) and Karl M. Waggoner (1894-1966) formed their partnership in 1923. Both architects had begun their professional careers working for Waterloo architects prior to World War I, Hansen for Clinton Shockley and Waggoner for Mortimer Cleveland. After serving in the war, obtaining additional training, and working brief stints for other architects, the two men relocated to Mason City where they opened the firm of Hansen & Waggoner.

During the next three decades Hansen & Waggoner secured commissions for residences, dozens of commercial buildings, schools, and churches in Mason City and other north central Iowa communities. Among their most notable projects were the Wagner-Mozart Music Hall in Mason City completed in 1929 and the Iowa Masonic Library in Cedar Rapids completed in 1955.

Hansen & Waggoner designed the last PWA-Era courthouse to be constructed in the state for Floyd County. Erected in 1940-1941, its basic plan and form were typical of the nine other Moderne Style courthouses built during the previous decade. The courtroom is among the most elaborately finished and best preserved of the PWA-Era courthouses.

Sanborn maps appear on the following pages showing the courthouse site before and after construction of the new building.

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<sup>20</sup>Centennial Issue, *Charles City Press*, (Charles City, Iowa), October 13, 1969.

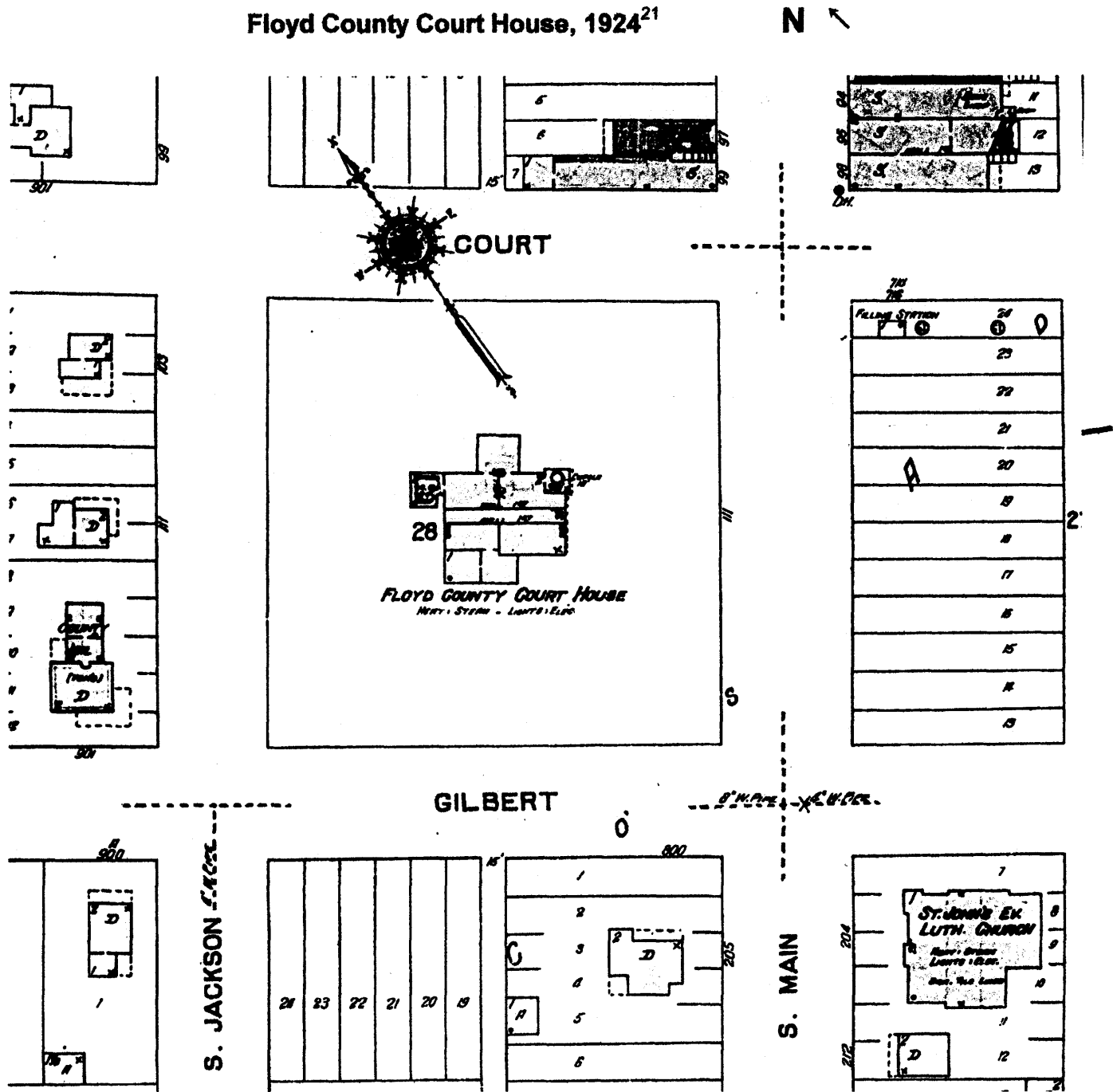
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<sup>21</sup>Insurance Maps of Charles City, Iowa, (New York: The Sanborn and Perris Map Company) 1924, p. 20.



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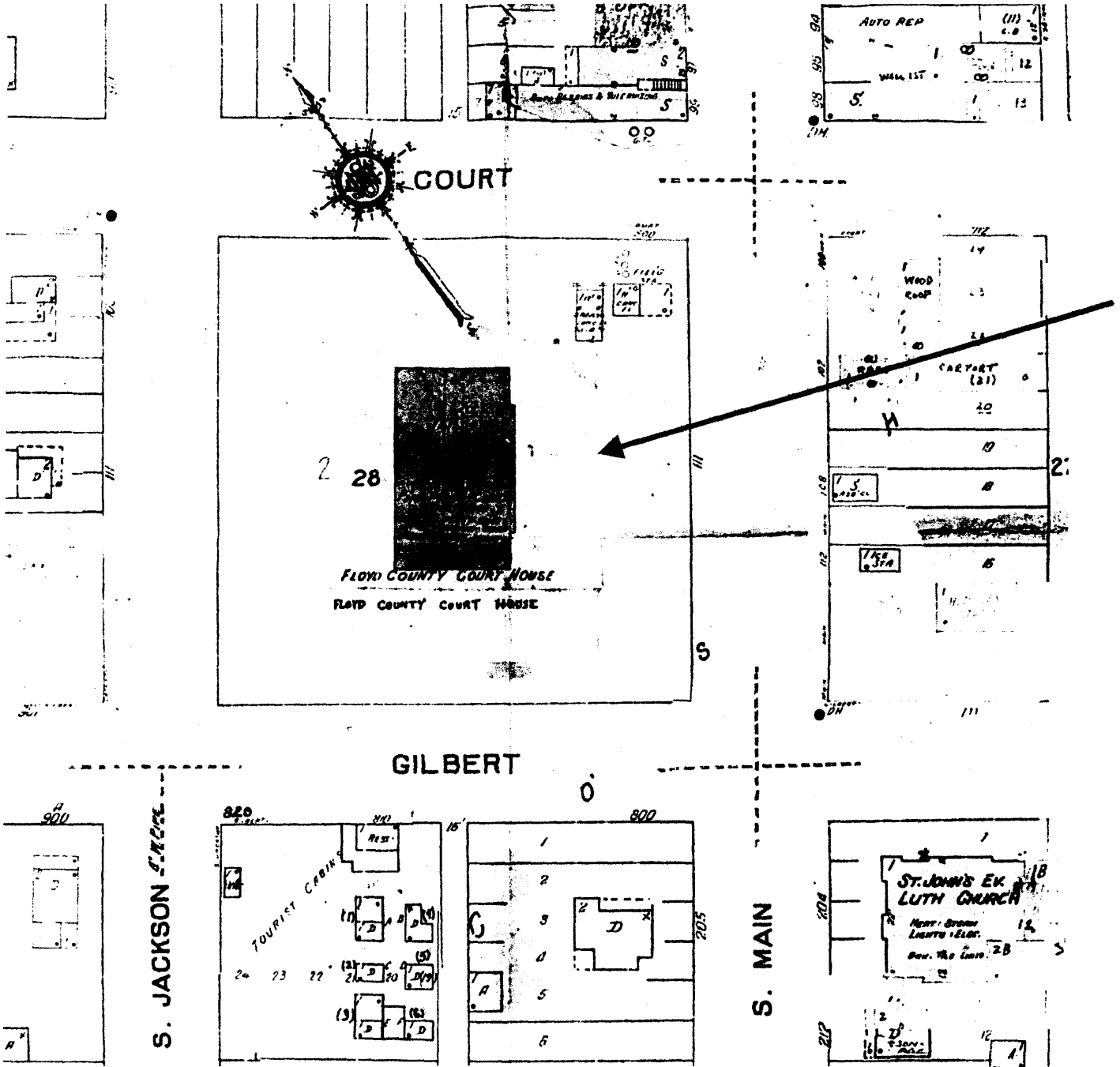
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**Floyd County Court House, 1924 updated to 1952<sup>22</sup>**



<sup>22</sup>Insurance Maps of Charles City, Iowa, (New York: The Sanborn and Perris Map Company) 1924 updated to 1952, p. 20.

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***Summary:***

In summary, the Floyd County Court House derives its significance as the one of ten county courthouses built in Iowa during the New Deal Era. Floyd County sought funding assistance from the federal Public Works Administration for the courthouse project but when turned down, pursued construction on its own. Designed by Mason City architects Harry Hansen and Karl Waggoner, it is a well-preserved example of the PWA Moderne Style of public building architecture that dominated the 1930s and early 1940s.

***Acknowledgement:***

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

Block 28, Kelly & Co.'s Addition, City of Charles City, Floyd County, Iowa.

**Boundary Justification:**

The boundaries comprise the original and current site for the Floyd County Court House. This site includes all of Block 28 bounded by Gilbert Street, S. Jackson Street, Court Street and South Main Street.

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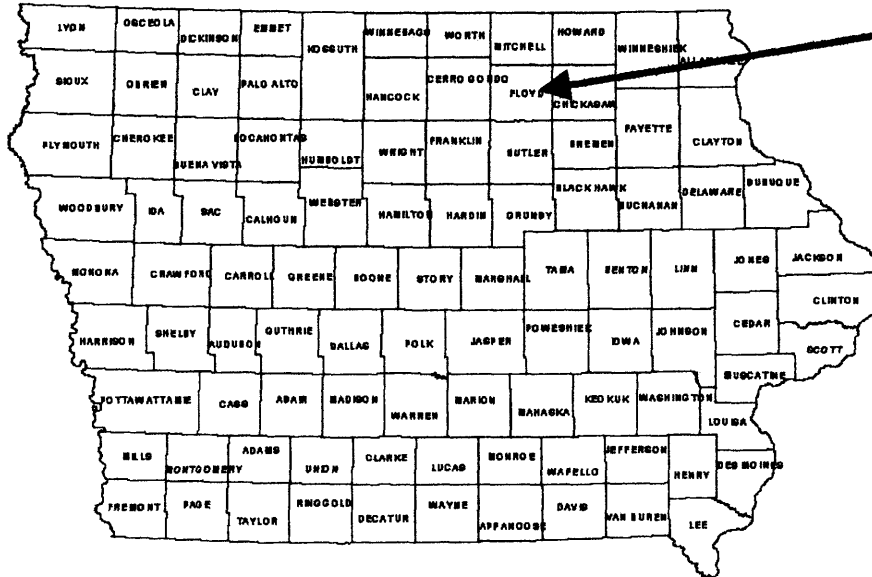
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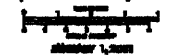
### Map: Floyd County, Iowa



DESIGNED AND TRANSMITTION BY  
**FLOYD COUNTY**

**IOWA**

Presented by  
Iowa Department  
of Transportation  
United States  
Department of Transportation



LEGEND

- State
- County
- Township
- Section
- Water
- Road
- Other

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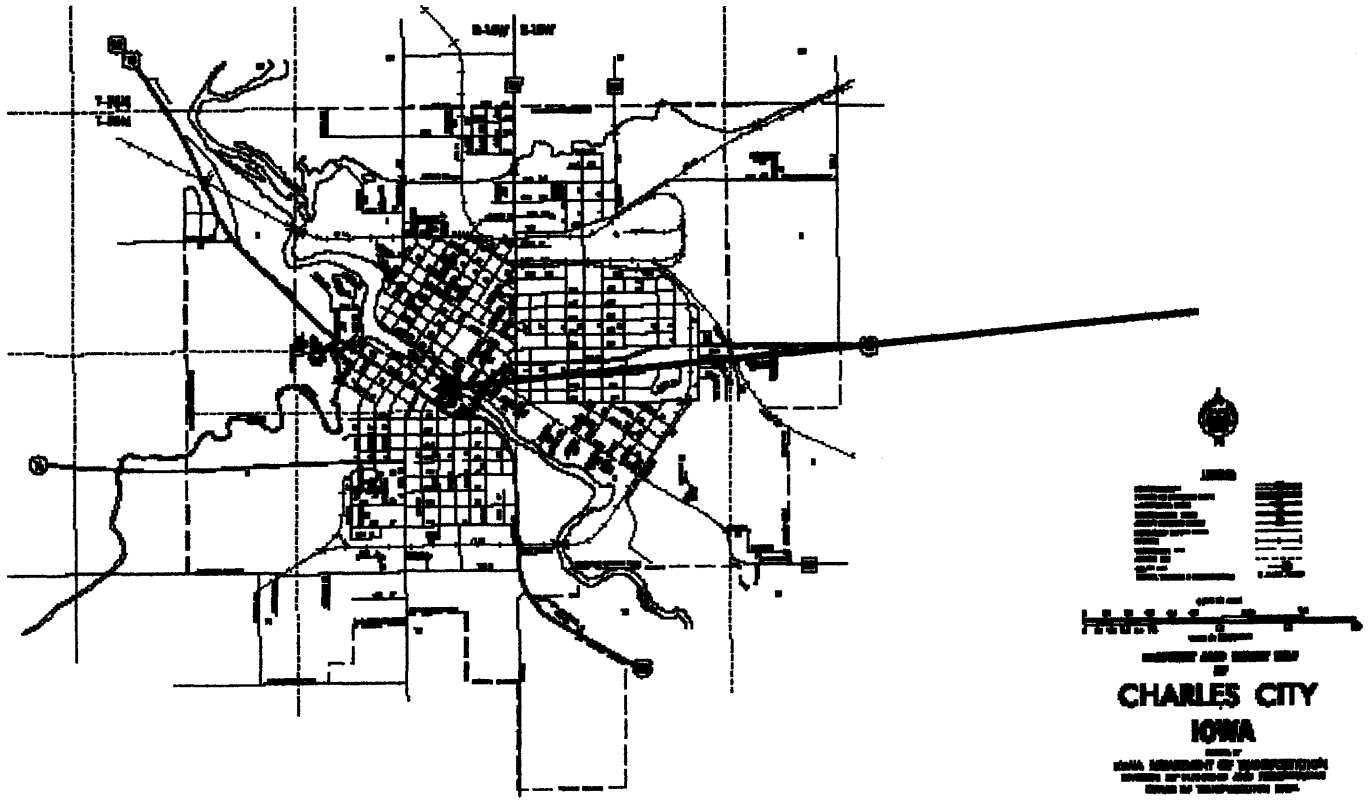
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**Photographs**

Bruce Meyer, photographer  
Date taken: October 25, 2002

1. Front façade, looking northwest
2. Front & southwest façades, looking north
3. Rear and northeast façades, looking south
4. Front entrance surround and step, looking northwest
5. Front entrance, looking northwest
6. Front entrance doors, looking northwest
7. Central staircase, between first and second floors, looking northwest
8. Central corridor, first floor, looking southwest
9. Courtroom, towards front of room, looking southwest
10. Courtroom, judge's bench, looking southwest
11. Courtroom, jury box, looking west
12. Courtroom, spectator seating, looking southeast
13. Courtroom, towards rear of room, looking northeast
14. Courthouse site, looking north, long view including flagpole, front & southwest façades