

IOWA SITE INVENTORY

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

MAY 29 1981

Site Number 41-014-001
District Name _____
Map Reference # 41-014-001
Topo Map Garner 1:24,000

IDENTIFICATION

1. Site Name Hancock County Courthouse
2. Village/Town/City Garner Township _____ County Hancock
3. Street Address State Street between 8th and 9th Streets
4. Legal Location Tallman's Add. 12
5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 451090 northing 4771470; Acreage less than 1 acre
6. Owner(s) Name Hancock County Board of Supervisors
7. Owner(s) Address Courthouse Garner, Iowa 50438
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: present Courthouse original Courthouse

DESCRIPTION

9. Date of Construction 1890 Architect/Builder F.W. Kinney, Architect
Gross Construction, 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:
Interior remodeled - cupola, tower, roof and balustrade removed - upper floor windows boarded up - Corner tower roofs removed.
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

Loss of significant roof elements have compromised the architectural interest of this courthouse. Another noticeable problem is the filling-in of upper story windows and several large arched openings.

The most interesting feature is the main entrance, recessed beneath a triple-arch facade featuring short, thick columns and heavy stone pedestals and balustrade.

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 _____
 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 556/11-21

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

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Item Number(s)

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

HANCOCK COUNTY

The early business of Hancock County was carried out wherever the county officers happened to live. With the close of the Civil War, immigrants again moved west across the country. The county's population increased to a size that necessitated the location of a central place of business. Truman Seymour from the State of New York convinced the county commissioners to accept his gift of a plat of land for the first county seat. The location was dubbed "Concord" and two small buildings were erected at a cost of \$2,000. The county officers were directed to occupy these structures, on December 15, 1865.

Barely two years had passed when the first county quarters were no longer sufficient to serve the county's growing needs. After one failure, a second vote was taken which resulted in 18 "no" and 55 "yes" votes for building a new courthouse. A local English immigrant was contracted to make bricks and put up the building. The bricks were made at Lime Creek and hauled over frozen muddy roads to Concord during the winter. Finishing lumber, doors, windows, and steel safe doors were hauled from the nearest railroad station at Waterloo. The \$10,000 courthouse was given over to the county near the end of 1868.

In the late 1890s, the city of Garner annexed Concord in an attempt to relocate the county courthouse nearer the new railroads and business district. A county seat fight was begun between Garner, near the eastern border of the county, and Britt, near the western border. The newspapers of each respective city took to writing editorials slandering its opponent. In 1897, when the Mayor of Britt published an order requiring the confinement of cattle, hogs, and horses, which had been allowed to run loose around town, Garner's "Hancock Signal" remarked that "Britt is an excellent grazing field. Hogs grow fat from the litter. It takes less work." To which Britt's newspaper responded: "The Salvation Army is talking of going to Garner to live for a while as their work there requires constant attention. Those Garner sinners are so infernal tough that they have to be mixed over frequently to keep a good scald on them."

Success was Garner's when a number of businessmen there decided to buy a site, build a courthouse, and give them to the county. Every family on the east side of the county was asked to sacrifice something for the cause. For instance, a 50-year-old immigrant cobbler and his wife, who "took in" washing and ironing, contributed \$50 toward the \$25,000 that was raised. Ten thousand people arrived in town on June 8, 1899, for the laying of the cornerstone. By November the building was finished, but Britt got a remonstrance prohibiting the removal of the county records for five years. Finally, in 1903, the board of supervisors was allowed to remove the county records from the offices