

IOWA SITE INVENTORY

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

Site Number 99-004-001
District Name _____
Map Reference # 99-004-001
Topo Map Clarion 1:24,000

IDENTIFICATION

1. Site Name Wright County Courthouse
2. Village/Town/City Clarion Township County Wright
3. Street Address Central Avenue between 1st and 2nd Streets, N.E.
4. Legal Location OT Courthouse Square
Urban: subdivision block parcel subparcel
Rural: township range section 1/4 section-1/4 section
5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 440080 northing 4731120; Acreage less than 1 ac
6. Owner(s) Name Wright County Board of Supervisors
7. Owner(s) Address Courthouse Clarion Iowa 50525
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: present Courthouse original Courthouse

DESCRIPTION

9. Date of Construction 1891-92 Architect/Builder W.R. Parsons & Son, Arch. E.D. Jones & Co. Bldr.
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: Transoms first floor windows and all of some second floor windows filled in, also large lunette windows in gable ends and the tympanum at the side entrance arch - dropped ceilings and other modern accoutrements inside - exterior sandblasted - aluminum sash windows and outer 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 vernacular building has several features which are distinctive among Iowa's extant courthouses. One is the very large polygonal projection at the rear. The other is the front entrance, recessed within an odd one-story projecting pavilion with stone roof, balustrade and semicircular bay to one side. Similar semicircular bays flank the site entrance. The building combines "medieval" elements with bracketted eaves and gable ends with very slight cornice returns. Altogether an eclectic mixture.

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

- | | |
|---|---|
| <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

- _____

CONTINUATION SHEET

Item Number(s) _____

WRIGHT COUNTY

The first sessions of court in Wright County were held in a privately-owned log cabin at the time the county was first organized in August of 1855. The old cabin was just west of Eagle Grove.

In April of 1858, the county decided that its seat of government should be located at Liberty. A two-story frame building was constructed to serve as the first real county-owned building, but Liberty was not to last long as the county seat because the heart of county government was moved to Clarion in 1866. The courthouse at Liberty was sold in 1869 and was turned into a general store on the first floor and a residence above. Unfortunately, this old landmark was torn down in 1913.

The second courthouse of the county was the first courthouse built at Clarion. It was a two-story frame structure across the street from the northeast corner of the square. The building was built very sturdily and showed hardly any signs of wear even 50 years after its construction. Eventually this courthouse was turned into the greater part of the Avondale Hotel.

The third and present courthouse was built in 1891 and 1892 at a total cost of about \$50,000. It sits atop a base of gray stone, and castle-like turrets emerge around the entryways. Although most of the courthouse is three stories high, the clock tower rises considerably higher above the multi-gabled roof.

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