

IOWA SITE INVENTORY

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

MAY 29 1981

Site Number 50-032-002
District Name _____
Map Reference # 50-032-002
Topo Map Newton 1:24,000

IDENTIFICATION

1. Site Name Jasper County Courthouse
2. Village/Town/City Newton Township _____ County Jasper
3. Street Address 1st Avenue West between West 1st and West 2nd Streets
4. Legal Location OT Courthouse Square
Urban: subdivision block parcel
Rural: township range section subparcel
1/4 section-1/4 section
5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 495490 northing 4616260; Acreage less than 1 ac
6. Owner(s) Name Jasper County Board of Supervisors
7. Owner(s) Address _____
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
Newton Iowa 50208
8. Use: present Courthouse original _____ Courthouse

DESCRIPTION

9. Date of Construction 1909-1911 Architect/Builder Proudfoot & Bird, Des Moines, Arch.
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: Central tower ending in small dome, with clock faces set into the "parapets" around tower - good interior details - aluminum doors - tall round-arched center window filled in with glass block.
15. Related Outbuildings and Property: barn other farm structures
 carriage house garage privy other _____
16. Is the building endangered? no yes-if so, why? _____
17. Surroundings of the building: open land woodland scattered outbuildings
 densely built-up commercial industrial residential other _____
18. Map _____
19. Photo
 Roll _____ Frame _____ View _____

SIGNIFICANCE (Indicate sources of information for all statements)

20. Architectural Significance

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

A well-preserved courthouse in Beaux Arts tradition, though relatively simple. Clock tower adds interest. As in the case of many courthouses from this period, interior mainspaces are important features. This one features rotunda with small-pattern tile floors, set off from adjacent hallways by freestanding column screens, or "screens" established through the use of engaged columns. The typana of the arches within the rotunda are painted with topical murals (log cabin, a buffalo head, and parade).

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

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

3. PHOTO IMAGES

CONTINUATION SHEET

Item Number(s) _____

JASPER COUNTY

The first court in Jasper County was held in 1846 in a special one-room addition to the hickory log cabin home of Matthew D. Springer. The first winter sessions must have been cozy as the public officials huddled inside the structure where clapboards were nailed over the cracks to keep the snow and wind out.

The first public building to be used as a courthouse was built of native green lumber in 1847. The total cost of the 18 by 30 foot building was \$87.50. This courthouse was sold in 1857 and moved to a farm near Newton in 1859.

The second courthouse was constructed in Newton's square in 1857 for \$26,600. It was an oblong building, 62 feet long and 50 feet wide. Although the basement was made of sandstone, the rest of the building was faced with white limestone and the walls were built of brick. Ionic columns graced the porticos which projected 12 feet from the fronts of the building. The court and jury rooms were on the second story of the structure and the cupola stretched 83 feet above the ground.

The 1912 county history of Jasper County, written by General James B. Weaver, prophesied that, "long after the pages of this county history are worn and turned yellow with age, in all human probability this building (the third and present county courthouse) will stand in all its massive beauty". So far the prognosis has been correct. This courthouse, made of Indiana limestone, was dedicated on April 6, 1911. It is approximately 121 feet long and 80 feet wide, with a 140-foot high tower. The total cost of this courthouse, including furniture, was slightly over \$200,000. At the time of construction, one of the most modern features was the inside ladies' restroom which was accessible from the street. The clock in the tower was fitted with an automatic attachment so that it would wind itself every day and light up at night. The clock was provided through the private donations of Jasper County citizens in the amount of \$1200. At the 1911 dedication of this fine building were 120 people who were present also at the dedication of the prior courthouse.

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