CITY, TOWN

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DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

## FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

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EXCELLENT

state land

X GOOD

\_\_FAIR

#### CONDITION

\_\_DETERIORATED
\_\_RUINS
\_\_UNEXPOSED

### **CHECK ONE**

XUNALTERED
ALTERED

#### CHECK ONE

XORIGINAL SITE

MOVED DATE

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The cornerstone of the Iowa State Capitol, more commonly called the Statehouse, was laid on November 23, 1871. It was dedicated on January 17, 1884, and completed around 1886.

The Statehouse in form and plan is a classic state capitol design of symmetrical wings dominated by a central dome. The structure measures 364 feet north to south, by 247 feet east to west, with the dome rising to a height of 275 feet above the ground floor. The Statehouse, although generally similar to numerous other statehouses dating from the second half of the nineteenth century, is distinct from the others by the extreme plasticity of its compositional units and the robust articulation of the classical details. This is in the manner of the French Baroque as popularized by the Ecole des Beaux Artes and particularly in the tradition of Hardouin-Mansort and Le Vau.

It is basically of three story construction. The ground floor houses a cafeteria and various offices and utility rooms. The Supreme Court, Governor's suite of offices, and other elected state officials are located on the first floor. The House and Senate chambers, the law library, and numerous committee rooms and legislative offices occupy the second floor.

A central rotunda extending above the first floor of the building to the dome dominates the interior. Some time early in the century a hold was cut into the first floor extending the rotunda into the basement, but there are plans to close this and restore it to its original design.

Other notable features include the grand staircase and the multileveled and balconied law library of Piranesian spacial complexity. Throughout the interior the Statehouse is decorated with a richness that is exceptional even considering its Mid-Victorian origins. In addition to a sumptuous collection of colored marbles and assorted hardwoods, the interior displays fine ornamental ironwork; elaborate encaustic tile floors; allegorical statuary; murals by Kenyon Cox, Edwin Howland Blashfield, and mosaics by Frederick Dielman.

The foundation of the building is made from glacial stone from Blackhawk and Buchanan counties (Iowa). The superstructure is construced of granite, limestone, and sandstone from Iowa, Missouri, Minnesota, Ohio and Illinois. Twenty-nine kinds of marbles were used in finishing the building, twenty-two of which were imported from Mexico and Europe. Domestic marbles were from Iowa, Tennessee, and Vermont.

Woods used in carvings and trim include ash, red oak, white oak, chestnut, black walnut, white walnut (butternut), cherry mahogany, poplar, catalpa, white pine, and yellow pine.

The ceilings of the House chamber were damaged by fire in 1904 and had to be replaced. The original gas lights have been replaced by electric lights and air conditioning has been installed. Some of the rooms in back of the legislative chambers have been double - decked in order to provide more space. The basement, originally a stable, has been converted to a cafeteria and offices. Generally, however, the architecture the decor and the beauty are as they were. The building is located on 165 acres of

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
PREHISTORIC	ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	COMMUNITY PLANNING	LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	RELIGION	
1400-1499	ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	CONSERVATION	LAW	SCIENCE	
1500-1599	AGRICULTURE	ECONOMICS	LITERATURE	SCULPTURE	
1600-1699	X_ARCHITECTURE	EDUCATION	MILITARY	SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
1700-1799	ART	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	THEATER	
1800-1899	COMMERCE	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	TRANSPORTATION	
1900-	COMMUNICATIONS	INDUSTRY	POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		INVENTION			
SPECIFIC DATES 1871 BUILDER/ARCHITECT J. Cochrane, A. Piquenard					

#### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The present Iowa State Capitol or Statehouse is the fifth building to house the state government. The almost palatial decoration, inside and out, contrasts sharply with its function as the seat of a rural, republican government. However, such a structure was in keeping not only with contemporary architectural enthusiasms but with people's pride in their system of government and a belief that its workings should be respectfully housed.

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Glenn F Bro	ockett. Chairman		
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Form No. 10-300a (Rev. 10-74)

# UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ON	LY	······································
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**CONTINUATION SHEET** 

**ITEM NUMBER** 

**PAGE** 

Iowa State Capitol Building, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa

- 1. According to our office architectural historian, the design of the Capitol was executed basically according to plan. However, the architect who replaced Piquenard, Bell, had the dome redesigned in better proportion to the building than that of the original plan.
- 2. Restoration of the Capitol has been unsystematic. No master plan was or has been adopted for such work. It has been and is a piecemeal operation, with restoration work occurring as the opportunity arises.
- 3. Acreage is 17. 165 acres comprised the original Capitol grounds. Since then, other state buildings of varying style and quality have occupied most of this space. The verbal description of these 17 acres is:

Bounded by Grand Avenue on the north, Walnut Street on the south, 9th Street East on the west, and 12th Street East on the east.

The present Capitol grounds are landscaped, with trees and semi-formal gardens.