

IOWA SITE INVENTORY

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

MAY 29 1981

JUL - 2 1981

Site Number 92-033-004
District Name _____
Map Reference # 92-033-004
Topo Map Washington

IDENTIFICATION

1. Site Name Washington County Courthouse
2. Village/Town/City Washington Township County Washington
3. Street Address North B Avenue between Main and 2nd Streets
4. Legal Location OT 7 5 & 6
Urban: subdivision block parcel
Rural: township range section
subparcel 1/4 section-1/4 section
5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 604700 northing 4560160; Acreage _____
6. Owner(s) Name Washington County Board of Supervisors
7. Owner(s) Address Courthouse Washington Iowa 52353
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: present Courthouse original Courthouse

DESCRIPTION

9. Date of Construction 1885-87 Architect/Builder William Foster & H.Liebbe, Des Moines, Arch./T. & H. Colwell, Bldg
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: Original entrance portals bricked-in; new entrance established at street level - windows partially blocked from inside. Note original wooden staircase, ceramic tile first floor - oak woodwork - plaster "medallions" on ceiling. Note position of original lighting fixtures (now 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

Excellent example of Iowa's Victorian Romanesque courthouse. Note variety of arch forms, 3-stage clock tower with roof shingles laid in decorative patterns.

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

3. PHOTO IMAGES 75/1, 87/3-4, 274/36-38, 40-41, 244/31, 34, 44

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

CONTINUATION SHEET

Item Number(s)

WASHINGTON COUNTY

The first courthouse in Washington County built by public funds was an 18 by 28 foot two-story structure made of oak and walnut lumber. It was used not only as office space and for court sessions, but also for school and religious services. The total cost of construction was \$759.

In February of 1845, the county board of commissioners negotiated a contract for the building of a second courthouse. In July of 1847 the contractor presented the new building to the board which was dissatisfied with the work performed. Fifty dollars was deducted for the carpentry work on the cupola and another \$110 was deducted on the balance of the building. The architect who designed the second courthouse was offered as his commission the choice of any unsold lots in Washington, Iowa, at \$5.00 each. The property values must have been inflated because it does not appear that the architect took advantage of this offer.

The third courthouse in Washington is the present courthouse built for \$75,000 and completed in 1887. The brick in this building was manufactured locally at the Frank E. Swift brickyards. The building is trimmed with white stone and its entrance was originally ornamented with figures of Justice and Liberty. A decorative clock tower stands at the southwest corner of the structure. Arches on the south and west sides, near the entryway, boldly proclaim the year of construction, 1886.

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