

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

MAY 29 1981

JUL 22 1981

Site Number 98-018-  
 District Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Map Reference # 98-018-  
 Topo Map North wood 1:24,000

**IDENTIFICATION**

1. Site Name Worth County Courthouse (Former)
2. Village/Town/City Northwood Township \_\_\_\_\_ County Worth
3. Street Address 921 Central Avenue
4. Legal Location OT 79 NE  
Urban: subdivision block parcel  
 Rural: township range section  
 subparcel 1/4 section-1/4 section
5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 482320 northing 4809920; Acreage less than 1 ac
6. Owner(s) Name Worth County Historical Society; City of Northwood
7. Owner(s) Address \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)  
Northwood Iowa 50459
8. Use: present Museum original Courthouse

**DESCRIPTION**

9. Date of Construction 1880 Architect/Builder Simon Larsen, 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:  
Front and side entrance vestibules added 1920's - converted to school in 1892 - now museum.
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

One of the few former courthouses extant in the state. Few of Iowa's courthouses were in the Italianate style, so the survival of this one, despite the large front entrance vestibule, is additionally noteworthy.

**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)

WORTH COUNTY

Little information is available on the early courthouse history of Worth County until the late 1870s. In 1879, some years after the organization of the county, an attempt was made to move the county seat from Northwood to the town of Kensett. A committee of Northwood citizens was appointed to take appropriate measures to counteract this petition. Land valued at \$500 was contributed and 53 citizens contributed a total of \$5,075 for the erection of a courthouse in Northwood. Their subscription provided that the building should be apportioned to the contributors if the land should ever revert to the original owners. They did, however, agree that the location of the building could be changed with the written consent of a majority of the subscribers.

Northwood was chosen to retain its status as the county seat, and a fine brick courthouse, plain and unpretentious, was built during the year 1880. The total cost of the facility was about \$4,400.

The present courthouse is again of solid brick mounted upon a base of limestone. A small clockless tower is its primary embellishment. The building is otherwise as unpretentious as its predecessor. It was completed in the year 1893.

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