

JUL - 2 1981

MAY 29 1981

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

Site Number 69-014-002
District Name _____
Map Reference # 69-014-002
Topo Map Red Oak N 1:24,000

IDENTIFICATION

- 1. Site Name Montgomery County Courthouse
- 2. Village/Town/City Red Oak Township _____ County Montgomery
- 3. Street Address Coolbaugh and Second Streets
- 4. Legal Location Central Add 39
Urban: subdivision block parcel subparcel
Rural: township range section 1/4 section-1/4 section
- 5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 312410 northing 4541980; Acreage less than 1 acre
- 6. Owner(s) Name Montgomery County Board of Supervisors
- 7. Owner(s) Address Courthouse Red Oak Iowa 51566
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
- 8. Use: present Courthouse original Courthouse

DESCRIPTION

- 9. Date of Construction 1890-91 Architect/Builder Richard & Co., Builders H.C. Koch & Co., Milwaukee, 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 Terra cotta
- 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:

Aluminum sash and main entrance doors - some dropped ceilings.

- 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

Perhaps the best of Iowa's Victorian Romanesque courthouses, with a profusion of towers, turrets, finials, cresting, and a large polygonal bay. Lively exterior wall surfaces, with smooth brick contrasting with rock-faced stone, variety of window shapes and sizes. The clock tower is very fine and adds to the strongly vertical character of the building.

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	3. PHOTO IMAGES 106/3, 6/5S-6S,
a. _____	<u>13/20S, 439/18-37</u>
b. _____	<u>Rolls 440, 441 and 442</u>
c. _____	<u>425/1, 2 & 4</u>
d. _____	_____
e. _____	_____

CONTINUATION SHEET

Item Number(s) _____

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

"Meager" is the only adjective that can be used to describe the first court facilities of Montgomery County in 1856. Court was held in a single room enclosed by a log house. The courthouse furniture was the dining room furniture of the people who lived in this house in the county seat, which was then located in Frankfort. The jury was put out upon the prairie to deliberate its verdict.

Eventually, a 36 by 18 foot two-story building was constructed for about \$1,000 to serve the public. At an election held in 1863, the people of the county decided to move the county seat to Red Oak. Some confusion with regard to the election arose, and all of the voters had to be canvassed. Finally, on June 8, 1864, the order for moving the county seat was announced. Moving the county seat was literally required since one of the conditions for the relocation mandated that the citizens of Red Oak move the courthouse from Frankfort to its new home.

The courthouse was raised up and put upon huge sleds which were drawn by 30 yoke of oxen. When about halfway to Red Oak, the movers encountered a severe blizzard with dark clouds and intense cold. The group moved off course and began going down an incline, where they lost control of their sleds. The oxen were unhitched and the courthouse allowed to wander on its own across the prairie. Everyone in the county available searched unsuccessfully for the lost courthouse. It wasn't until well after the storm that it was located on a homestead two miles northeast of Red Oak. Eventually it was guided to the northwest corner of the public square.

As time passed, a number of propositions for building a new courthouse failed. However, the county finally committed itself to building a first-class structure that all the county could be proud of. A contract was let to an Omaha construction firm for about \$69,000. The company failed to satisfy the contract and left their work uncompleted with a number of unpaid bills for steel and terra cotta. Eventually the courts ruled that the county was not liable for the debts of its contractor, and, therefore, Montgomery County received much of the construction material without charge. The cornerstone was laid for this present courthouse on July 4, 1890. It was sprinkled with corn, wine, and oil, symbolizing nourishment, refreshment, and joy. This beautiful castle was worth well over \$100,000 upon completion.

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