

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Floral Hall, the centerpiece of the Shelby County fairgrounds on the northeastern edge of Harlan, is the oldest surviving structure in this 106 year old fairgrounds complex, and it is probably one of the oldest, relatively unaltered, extant county fair exhibition building in the state. Constructed sometime between 1879 and 1882 to house exhibits believed primarily to be of interest to women, this wood frame edifice, erected in the shape of a cross, has been utilized annually for a wide range of exhibits and activities that have attracted members of both sexes. Extant cross-shaped buildings of this vintage are uncommon in Iowa.

Floral Hall is a cross-shaped building that consists of four identical 18 by 18 foot sections that intersect in an 18 foot interior space. The edifice is of wood frame construction, rests on irregularly coursed sandstone, is sheathed with white painted wooden clapboards, and is capped with a cross gable roof, which in turn is capped with a cross gabled roof cupola located at the point where the four sections of the roof and building intersect. Each section of the building contains a set of double doors on the first floor and a window opening in the upper half story. The cupola has four window openings. In addition to its unusual configuration, other noteworthy exterior details include a plain boxed cornice and frieze, corner boards, and shouldered architrave window and door trim. Although these details are characteristic of the Greek Revival, in this instance, they probably are more likely the result of ready availability of materials either from a lumberyard or millwork catalog provided by same than a conscious design decision.

On the interior, Floral Hall contains open exhibit space. Walls and ceilings are covered with panelling and wall board of rather recent vintage. The floor is covered with a cement slab that is cracked and heaved. The only visible, significant interior fabric that may be original are three large wooden cupboards with sliding glass doors.

Based on Sanborn fire maps and an 1911 photograph, it appears that Floral Hall has undergone no major structural alteration over the years. Window openings are presently boarded up and have been for around fifty years or more. Presently, the condition of the building can best be described as fair. In some portions of the structure, sills and siding are decayed and need replacement, and the whole is in need of renovation. The fair board has considered demolishing Floral Hall and replacing it with a metal building. Because of the interest of the Shelby County Historical Society in saving it, the fair board has postponed demolition if it can be proved the building has historic value and interest. The historical society hopes to see the edifice restored and utilized for a wide range of fair and non-fair activities

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1879-82 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Floral Hall, the centerpiece of the Shelby County fairgrounds on the north-eastern edge of Harlan, is the oldest surviving structure in this 106 year old fairgrounds complex, and it is probably one of the oldest, relatively unaltered, extant county fair exhibition building in the state. Constructed sometime between 1879 and 1882 to house exhibits believed primarily to be of interest to women, this wood frame edifice, erected in the shape of a cross, has been utilized annually for a wide range of exhibits and activities that have attracted members of both sexes. Cross-shaped buildings of this vintage are rare in Iowa as are 19th century fair buildings in predominantly agricultural counties.

Like most county fairs in Iowa, the Shelby County one owes its origins to the activities of a county agricultural society. Although the Shelby County Agricultural Society was organized in 1858, it did not hold an agricultural fair until 1869, and it appears that the fair did not become an annual event until after 1872. That year the society purchased sixty-five acres for a permanent fair grounds and trotting park. By 1879 this location had become inadequate, the society purchased the present fairgrounds site. Within three years, the organization had constructed Floral Hall, several stock sheds, and a half-mile racetrack. By 1885 receipts for the fair reached \$1,216, and by the next year, they increased to nearly \$1,600.

In 1891 the agricultural society sold the fairgrounds complex to the Shelby County Fair Association for \$1 and the agreement of the latter to assume the \$1,600 mortgage on the facility. Apparently this change occurred not because of financial problems on the part of the society, but an effort on the part of its membership to create a corporation capitalized at \$10,000 to develop the fairgrounds more fully. The fair flourished under association management, new structures and attractions were added, and by 1914 the fair itself was being heralded as equal to any in the state.

Within a few years, however, interest in the fair waned in Shelby County, and a decision had to be made whether to continue holding it or not. Although the fair continued to be held, changes were made, particularly in terms of de-emphasizing midway attractions, and greater emphasis was placed on 4-H activities. The fair continues today to offer a wide range of attractions and activities that appeal to a wide range of Shelby County's citizens. In recent years, the Shelby County Garden Club has revived the floral department with an art show, needlecraft and oven products shows in Floral Hall.



9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to Continuation Sheet 0-2

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Harlan Iowa

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

UTM References

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4	6	1	4	9	2	0
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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Being a portion of the Northwest quarter of the southeast quarter of Sec. 7, T79N, R38W, defined as follows. Beginning at the fairgrounds entrance (Broadway Ave. and 4th, located 2112' west and 1160' north of the SE corner of Sec. 7), thence east 600', north 350', west 150', south 150' and E 150' describing thereby a

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries square which includes this building only.

state n/a code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Text: Ralph J. Christian, Architectural Historian
Form: James E. Jacobsen, National Register Coordinator

organization Iowa HPO date 13 February 1985

street & number E. 12th & Grand Ave. telephone 515-281-8697

city or town Des Moines state Iowa 50319

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Adrian A. Anderson

title Executive Director Iowa State Historical Department date 28 February 1985

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register of Historic Places
Keeper of the National Register date 4-11-85

Attest: Chief of Registration date

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Bibliography

Item number 9

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Atherton, Lewis, Main Street on the Middle Border (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1954).

Biographical History of Shelby and Audubon Counties (Chicago: W.S. Dunbar Publishers, 1889).

History of Western Iowa (Sioux City: Western Publishing Company, 1882).

Premium List of the Shelby County Agricultural Fair for 1869," original handbill in Shelby County Historical Society Museum, Harlan, copy in OHP files.

Shelby County Historical Society, Past and Present of Shelby County, Volume III (Holstein: Bye and Bye Printing, 1976).

Standard Atlas of Shelby County (Chicago: George A. Ogle & Company, 1911).

White, Edward, Past and Present of Shelby County (Indianapolis: B. F. Bowen Company, 1915).