

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED MAY 9 1977
DATE ENTERED AUG 31 1978

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

First Johnson County Asylum

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Route 1

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Iowa City

X VICINITY OF

First

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Iowa

CODE

COUNTY

Johnson

CODE

103

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Johnson County, c/o Board of Supervisors

STREET & NUMBER

Courthouse, Clinton Street

CITY, TOWN

Iowa City

VICINITY OF

STATE

Iowa

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Johnson County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Clinton Street

CITY, TOWN

Iowa City

STATE

Iowa

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" 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

Johnson

The Johnson County Asylum, the first county facility for the care of paupers and the insane, was built in 1855 as a four-room cabin. Two long wings, also frame, were added in 1859, one for paupers and one for the insane. This structure served as the county asylum until a new building complex was erected in 1886.

All that remains of the original 1855-86 structure is the wing which housed the insane. The frame, gable-roof structure is 24 feet wide and 50 feet long. The eight-bay side elevations have rectangular windows, the upper sash with four lights, the lower boarded in. Vertical wood siding reaches from ground level to the sills. Above, the siding is horizontal. The roof is covered with sheet metal.

There is no foundation beneath the structure. Flooring is of wide, rough planks, many of which have been broken or removed. Walls and ceiling are also planked. The interior contains a central hall running the full length of the building. Off it on each side are cells, approximately 7' x 7', with horizontal plank walls and vertical 2" x 4"'s used to create the barred front of each. Each cell had a door, also of 2x4's, and a few retain their iron fastenings. Beside each door is a narrow, horizontal opening through which inmates were given food. The soffits of several of the lintels feature a row of small, closely-spaced round holes, into which bars were once fitted.

The structure is in a deteriorated condition, having been used as a hog house for many years. Much of the flooring and cell barring is broken, and window glass is missing. It is situated amid a variety of 20th century agricultural buildings, which are part of the farm operations associated with the present county care facility. Alterations, aside from the addition of glass in windows and the application of the metal roof (date unknown) have resulted chiefly from deterioration over the years. The administrators of the present facility will make very minor improvements to this old structure, in order to enable visitors to inspect this exceedingly rare artifact from the early days of mental health care.

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 type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1859

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This remaining section of the first asylum in Johnson County presents a moving and thought-provoking glimpse into the history of public mental health care, not only in the county, but perhaps throughout the state and nation. The fact that it is still in existence, and essentially unchanged, is very important, because as attitudes toward the mentally ill, and methods of care, have changed over the past century, most communities have made haste to remove the vestiges of the inhuman conditions in which 19th-century insane persons were kept. Within this shabby building (which probably was no less shabby during the years it was occupied by human beings) can be seen the small, barred cubicles, which were periodically washed down with buckets of water, within which the insane were confined. Treatment was nonexistent, heat provided only by a small stove in the hallway, and the amount of physical care administered here was probably little more than that given the hogs who occupied the structure in later years.

This structure served for nearly 30 years, until 1886-9, when it was superseded by a small complex of brick structures, one each for administration, paupers, and the insane. In this facility, too, patients were confined behind bars, but conditions here were reported in 1900 to be "above the average county institution". The present county care facility was built on the site of this second asylum, in 1964. The contrast between the wooden cells of the first asylum and the clean, airy, dormitory-style accommodations of today's county home is stark and impressive, a powerful visual illustration of the changes wrought in public mental health care over a century.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Ensign, Forrest C., "The Care of the Insane in Iowa," reprinted from the Bulletin of Iowa State Institutions, Iowa City, Iowa, 1900.
 Fore, M. Opal, A.C.S.W., "Care for the Mentally Ill in Johnson County," paper presented to the Women's Club, Solon, Iowa, 18 November 1965.
 Minute Books, Board of Supervisors, Johnson County.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre (structure only)

UTM REFERENCES

A	[1,5]	[6 1,6 1,5,0]	[4,6 1,2 3,2,5]	B	[]	[]	[]
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	[]	[]	[]	D	[]	[]	[]

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Mr. and Mrs. Joe Miltner, Administrators

ORGANIZATION

Johnson County Care Facility

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

Route 1

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Iowa City

STATE

Iowa

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

Philip D. Anderson

TITLE

Director, Division of Historic Preservation

DATE

4/26/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

W. M. ...

DATE

8/31/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

Charles ...

DATE

8-18-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER