

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 03000827
Property Name: Allamakee County Court House

County: Allamakee State: Iowa

PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa MPS
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.



August 28, 2003

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 8: Significance

“Architecture” is hereby dropped as an Area of Significance to be consistent with the narrative statement supporting eligibility under Criterion A for its association with significant events in Government. .

The Iowa State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

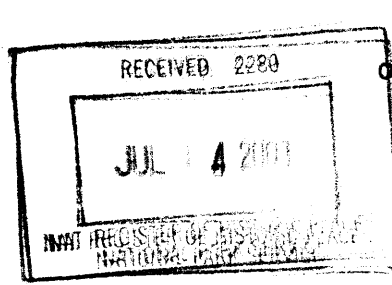
DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file**
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 19A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.



JUL 10 2003
OMB No. 10024-0018

827

Name of Property

historic name Allamakee County Court House

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 110 Allamakee Street N/A not for publication

city or town Waukon N/A vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Allamakee code 005 zip code 52172

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (see continuation sheet for additional comments).

Rowell J. Sork July 10, 2003
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that the property is:
 entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Anna McClelland Date of Action 8/28/03

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
1		sites
		structures
2		objects
4		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

Enter "NA" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa MPD

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/courthouse

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/courthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/ PWA Moderne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls BRICK
STONE/limestone
roof ASPHALT
other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1940 - 1953

Significant Dates

1940

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Altfillisch, Charles

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Allamakee County Auditor's Office

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than 5 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 [1] [5] [6] [2] [3] [7] [2] [0] [4] [7] [9] [1] [7] [4] [0]
Zone Easting Northing
3 [][][][][][][][][][][][][][][][]
Zone Easting Northing

2 [][][][][][][][][][][][][][][][]
Zone Easting Northing
4 [][][][][][][][][][][][][][][][]
Zone Easting Northing
[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mariys A. Svendsen, Svendsen Tyler, Inc.
organization for State Historical Society of Iowa date January 2003
street & number N3834 Deep Lake Road telephone 715/469-3300
city or town Sarona state WI zip code 54870

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the complete form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Allamakee County, c/o Mary O'Neil, Auditor
street & number 110 Allamakee St. telephone 563/568-3522
city or town Waukon state IA zip code 52172

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7

Page 1

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

7. Description

Site: The Allamakee County Court House (contributing) was built in 1939-1941 in a former city park in Waukon, Iowa located between 2nd Avenue NW (formerly Worcester Street) on the north, 1st Avenue NW (formerly Court Street) on the south, Allamakee Street on the east, and the eastern property line of Block H of the Pitt Shattuck Addition on the west. The courthouse site (contributing) is located immediately across the street from the Old Allamakee County Court House (listed in the National Register of Historic Places). No historic archeological investigation was made to determine the presence of foundations or other building remains on the former park site. State Road 9 and State Road 76 extend along Allamakee Street along the east side of the courthouse square.

The courthouse site occupies some of the highest ground in Waukon. It is level on the front and north sides and slopes down along the south and west sides. The courthouse is set back approximately 90 feet from the front sidewalk. A sidewalk extends along the front of the building with steps leading down a terraced slope on the southwest side past the Civil War Soldiers Monument (contributing) that predates the building. The courthouse's original multi-story flagpole (contributing) is centered on the building front. Mature deciduous and coniferous trees are scattered across the east and north sides of the square. Terraced asphalt-paved parking lots extend along the rear of the building and the northwest corner. An exercise area enclosed with chain link fencing is located at the southwest corner of the building and is accessible from the courthouse's third floor jail.

Allamakee Street serves as the principal entrance route into Waukon from the north. It intersects with Waukon's major retail street, Main Street, which is located one block south of the courthouse square. The facing blocks surrounding the courthouse include a mix of residential, commercial and public buildings. The former Allamakee County Court House, a Greek Revival brick structure erected in 1861, is used as a historical museum. Brick and frame houses and a brick church also face the courthouse along Allamakee Street. The blocks to the south contain multi-story masonry commercial blocks with more residences to the west and north. Church steeples dot the high ground sites to the south and west.

Exterior: The Allamakee County Court House erected in 1939-1941 is one of ten courthouses built in Iowa during the federal Public Works Administration (PWA) program's operation in the 1930s and early 1940s. It has a rectangular footprint with the original building measuring 129 feet by 71 feet according to the original plans. The front of the courthouse faces east. The courthouse has a poured concrete structure with a brick and stone facing. The foundation and upper walls are clad in a mottled grayish tan-colored brick set in a matching mortar. Bedford limestone is used for various trim elements identified in the elevation descriptions below. The present facing brick was installed in 1992 during an extensive rehabilitation of the building designed to correct serious water infiltration problems in the walls. The color and finish of the brick was carefully matched to the original brick and cut stone trim elements were reused. A communications antenna is located on the courthouse roof.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7

Page 2

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

Front elevation: On the front or west elevation, the building's central section is five bays wide with a height of 3½-stories or approximately 40 feet. The three centermost bays have a slightly higher height than the outer bays. At the north and south ends of the main block are 1½-story subsidiary wings, less than half the height of the central section. These wings project forward slightly from the central section. A raised basement extends beneath the entire building. Each of the central section's wide bays contains a pair of recessed window openings. Plain limestone panels separate the windows between levels. Wide brick pilasters separate the bays and narrow vertical brick sections divide the window pairs in each bay. A similar brick pilaster treatment is used to frame the windows in the outer bays of the center section. The brick wall and window arrangement in the subsidiary wings is modified slightly with single rather than paired windows used in each wing. There is no decorative patternwork in the stone panels or cornice.

The dominant design element of the front elevation is the stone entrance surround and tall transom. The surround is fashioned of Bedford stone with a recessed opening set between an angled stone paneled passage. The entrance has its original tall multi-light transom design with a unique grillwork design consisting of a stock of corn centered behind a series of diamond shaped pieces. The entrance lintel features a stylized stone carving. The subject relates to the corn stalk below and includes a stylized view of nature with lightening, rain clouds, sunrays, and the face and hand of God looking down from above. Above the carved design, the words "Allamakee County Court House" are incised in the stonework flanked by a male and female pioneer figure to either side.

All of the courthouse's windows are replacement sash that were installed in 1993. The new sash are fabricated of enamel finished aluminum and replaced an earlier window replacement system consisting of glass block. The present replacement units are configured with a series of horizontal lights including one operable light. The first floor openings have six lights, the second floor has five lights, and the third floor has four lights. The six courtroom windows that extend between the second and third floor each have nine horizontal lights.

Side elevations: The north and south elevations each contain three bays set in the 3½-story main block with 1½-story wings in the foreground. The change in site elevation (sloping down from east to west) puts the basement entrance on the south elevation at ground level. Its plain stone entrance surround has a single door with narrow sidelights and a plain glass transom. Three windows each with four horizontal lights are located to either side of the entrance in the wing. On the first floor of the wing, a pair of 6-light windows is located above the entrance. No other windows are located in the wing in part due to the presence of vaults in the interior. The main block has paired windows in each of the three bays on the second and third floors. Stone and brickwork is similar to that of the front façade and window size and configuration also matches the front and rear façades. In 1974-76 the Public Safety Center was added to the north end of the courthouse. The north elevation faces 2nd Avenue and as a result has the appearance of a more significant façade. The stone entrance surround is identical to that of the south façade with the addition of incised lettering above the door that reads "Allamakee County." The first floor also includes

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7

Page 3

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

additional paired windows to either side of those above the entrance. The window arrangement and masonry details on the main block's upper levels match that of the south façade except on the third floor. Here the center and south bay windows are part of the jail's cellblock and are covered with a grid of bars applied on the exterior.

Rear elevation: The rear or west elevation is a more functional version of the front façade with several modifications from the original design. The walls of the central section, wings and additions are finished in brick with concrete used for recessed panels in all of the window bays except those above the outer bays third floor windows of the central section. The window arrangement relates to the interior uses of the building. For example, the third floor has seven windows in the center section that are part of the jail's cellblock. As a result, they are covered with a grid of bars applied on the exterior. Another example is the single tall window centered on the midway between the first and second floors. It is located at the landing of the interior staircase to provide light for the stairwell and the public corridors at both levels.

Several changes have been made at the basement level of the rear elevation. Here a flat roofed projecting addition originally had a pair of overhead doors leading to an underground garage. These openings have been infilled with two sets of double doors and matching brick. To the north an adjoining 1½-story addition (non-original) has a flat roof with matching brick. It has a single overhead fiberglass door facing north. A sloping entrance ramp connects from the garage door to the parking lot.

The other changes in the rear elevation include the installation of an exterior fire escape at the southwest corner of the building. It extends to the second floor and several window openings have been altered to accommodate its use. In addition an enclosed exercise area for the jail's prisoners has been installed at the southwest corner. The concrete pad has tall chain link fence walls with barbed wire upper edge for security.

Interior Floor Plan: The Allamakee County Court House has a central corridor plan similar to those of the other nine PWA-Era Courthouses in Iowa. The front entrance is located midway along the east façade and opens into entrance vestibules set between the basement level and the first floor. The original floor plan had a secondary rear entrance located midway along the west wall but this was abandoned when the rear addition was constructed. The front entrance vestibule is set perpendicular to the central corridor, which runs the full length of the building. Public entrances are located at the north and south end of the corridors on the basement level. Individual county offices outfitted to meet the needs of specific county functions open onto the public corridor on the first floor. Circulation between floors in the courthouse is via the central staircase located opposite the front entrance vestibule and via secondary staircases located in the northeast and southwest corners of the building. An elevator shaft was designed in the original plan and installed at the time of initial construction. The elevator is located adjacent to the central staircase in the north corridor with new equipment installed here in 1990. The district courtroom is located on the second floor and the county jail on the third floor. Design elements and finishes for the most important spaces in

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7

Page 4

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

the courthouse are discussed in greater detail below.

Front entrance vestibule: The front entrance vestibule has two levels with the floor and steps covered in black terrazzo and the upper landing in gray terrazzo. The walls are covered from floor to ceiling in polished gray marble resting on a black terrazzo base. Commemorative information is inscribed directly in the marble walls rather than mounted on a separate plaque. The original decorative plaster cornice has a series of widely spaced medallions, each containing an "A". The original ceiling light is identical to that found in the Bremer County Court House in Waverly constructed in 1936-37. It is a tall, six-sided pendant style fixture fabricated using a combination bronze and aluminum framing and decorative elements and white glass. The main decoration is a series of eagles along the upper edge. A recessed fluorescent fixture has been added to the ceiling for additional light.

Public corridors: The first floor corridor has a terrazzo floor in two colors. The border and baseboard are black and the field is made of 30-inch squares of light gray terrazzo. The walls are clad in a two-part polished gray marble wainscoting and a smooth textured plaster above the wainscoting. The walls at the entrance corners have a curved surface including the marble wainscoting. A marble encased drinking fountain area is in the south end of the corridor. New fluorescent ceiling lights and surface conduit have been installed along the corridor. The central sections of the ceiling in the public corridor have a textured plaster finish. Office doors opening onto the corridor are a mix of new wood doors (north end, 1990-1991) and original metal doors with grained finish. Openings are recessed slightly.

The second floor corridor is finished in a similar manner as the first floor including terrazzo floors, marble wainscoting and marble lined drinking fountain, metal doors with grained finish, fluorescent lights, and plaster ceiling. The basement level's central corridor has a lower ceiling height. Wainscoting consists of glazed tile rather than marble, approximately 7 feet high. The walls in the north and south entrance vestibules are clad in the same tile from floor to ceiling. Terrazzo floors are used here as on the other floors.

County offices: Each of the county offices contains a service counter at which public business is transacted, a public lobby in front of the counter, a staff work area to the rear of the counter, and one or more private offices. Work vaults for storage of records are located in each of the outside corners of the building. All offices have been remodeled to some extent with new counters of various styles installed along with new floor finishes. Offices on the first floor include the treasurer, auditor, recorder, and clerk of district court.

The original supervisor's room on the first floor has been converted to office space and the meeting room space on the basement level now serves as the supervisor's room. The room has a raised platform at the south end and its floors retain the original asphalt floor tile – a black field with a gray border. The room was reduced in size in the early-1990s with the north half converted to office space.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7

Page 5

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

Central staircase: The central staircase is located midway along the west wall of the central corridor opposite the front entrance. The staircase features a central, double-wide run leading up to a wide landing between flights with return runs along the walls leading from the main landing to the second floor. From the first floor, the runs along the walls lead down to a shared landing and from there, separate runs extend down to the basement level. The steps are made of black terrazzo with gray marble along the walls. The staircase's aluminum balustrade has slim horizontal members with widely spaced vertical posts and curved corner returns. The balustrade continues without interruption opening onto the second level. A matching handrail is mounted along the marble wainscoting. A single tall window is centered on the landing between first and second floors with a shorter window on the landing between the first floor and basement, both providing abundant light for the first floor and second floor corridors.

Courtroom: The most important space aesthetically and functionally in a courthouse is usually the courtroom. The Allamakee County Court House's district courtroom is located on the second floor facing the front of the building (east). It has a two-story ceiling height that extends into the third floor with original floor dimensions of 50 feet by 29 feet. The judge's bench, witness stand, clerk's desk, and reporter's desk are located in the southeast corner of the room with the jury box on the left or west side. Spectator seating in the south half of the room consists of a series of walnut pews placed theater style with a center aisle. The closed bar separating the spectator area from the counsel tables is clad in walnut veneer. The original swinging gates in the bar are finished in a diamond pattern of matching walnut veneer. The top of the bar is painted black.

The 19-foot walls of the courtroom are covered in walnut paneling set in four horizontal courses with the grain set vertically. A section of the wood paneling along the east wall was damaged by water and refinished to match the original in ca. 1997. Black marble is used for the baseboard of the walls and all of the built-in furnishings. A short tiered wood molding has three courses with a half-diamond design. A shallow multi-layered boxed cornice rings the perimeter of the room above the cornice. The textured plastered ceiling was installed in the 1980s replacing the original acoustic tile. Along the east wall three groups of paired window openings provide natural light for the courtroom. Ceiling lights are half-sphere, pendant style with white glass globes. These match the original light fixture design and were installed in ca. 1997 to replace non-original fluorescent fixtures. Floors in the courtroom were originally covered in black and gray rubber tile. Carpet was installed on top of the original tile in ca. 1997.

The "niche" or recessed wall at the front of the courtroom behind the judge's bench and witness stand has a dramatic design incorporated into the veneer. A vertical column centered on the wall contains large diamonds made of contrasting light and dark grained pieces of walnut veneer extending from floor to ceiling. The top diamond has a round medallion containing a scale of justice inlaid in a lighter wood. Recessed lights in the ceiling above the medallion set off the wood patternwork and are part of the original design. Though the niche's wall elements and lighting techniques are more simple in design, the concept is similar to that of the Cass County Court House

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7

Page 6

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

in Atlantic.

Walnut paneling matching that of the walls set on a black marble base is used to form the jury box, judge's bench, witness stand, and desks at the front of the courtroom. A cap molding painted black is used along the top of all of these stationary parts except the judge's bench. Here a slightly more elaborate design consisting of fluted and convex vertical pieces is used. The judge's bench is placed two steps above the courtroom floor with an access door leading to the judge's chambers in the northeast corner and a second door leading to the jury deliberation room in the northwest corner adjacent to the jury box. The jury box has its original square-backed upholstered seats. Five rows of walnut benches are included in the spectator area along with a single doublewide bench placed in a shallow niche along the rear wall. Original wood slatted air vent covers are set in the walls to either side of the rear bench.

The judge's chambers, law library, jury room, and other related offices are located along the north end of the second floor. They are accessed through doors located to either side of the judge's bench or through a separate access at the end of the central corridor. The south end of the corridor contains the county attorney's offices and originally held a grand jury room.

Floor plan: As originally conceived, the principal county offices for the Allamakee County Court House were to be located on the first floor along with working vaults. Large offices were provided for the treasurer, auditor, recorder, clerk, and sheriff with a smaller meeting room for the supervisors. The second floor contained the district courtroom, judge's chambers, law library, jury rooms, and attorney's office. A second magistrate's courtroom has now been added to the southeast corner of the second floor replacing an office and former grand jury room. The third floor originally contained a three-bedroom apartment that served as the sheriff's residence, dormitory rooms for women and men jurors, a laundry room, and the jail cells for men, women, and juveniles. The apartment and juror dormitory space has now been converted to dayrooms, jail support area, and offices for the sheriff's department. The basement originally contained the county superintendent's office and library, the county nurse's office, an additional storage vault, a large meeting room, a public relief office, and space for the county engineer. The meeting room has been reduced in size by half as noted previously and now also serves as the supervisor's room. As originally built, the building was served by two central systems – one for operations of the building's clocks and another containing a central chute for the disposal of waste paper from each floor. Neither central system is currently in use.

During the past several decades in a series of small to medium sized, phased remodelings of the original allocation of space in the courthouse has been altered somewhat. Changes were based on the obsolescence of certain offices (county school superintendent) and functions (sheriff's residence and dormitory space for jurors). In other instances, the expanded needs of specific offices were accommodated by the allocation of vacant areas (assessor's office). Changes made to meet access requirements were done within the original space allocations (ADA rest rooms). Selected floor plans prepared in February 1939 prior to the courthouse's construction appear below.¹

¹Floor Plans prepared by Charles Altfillisch, (Auditor's Office, Allamakee County Court House), February, 1939.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7

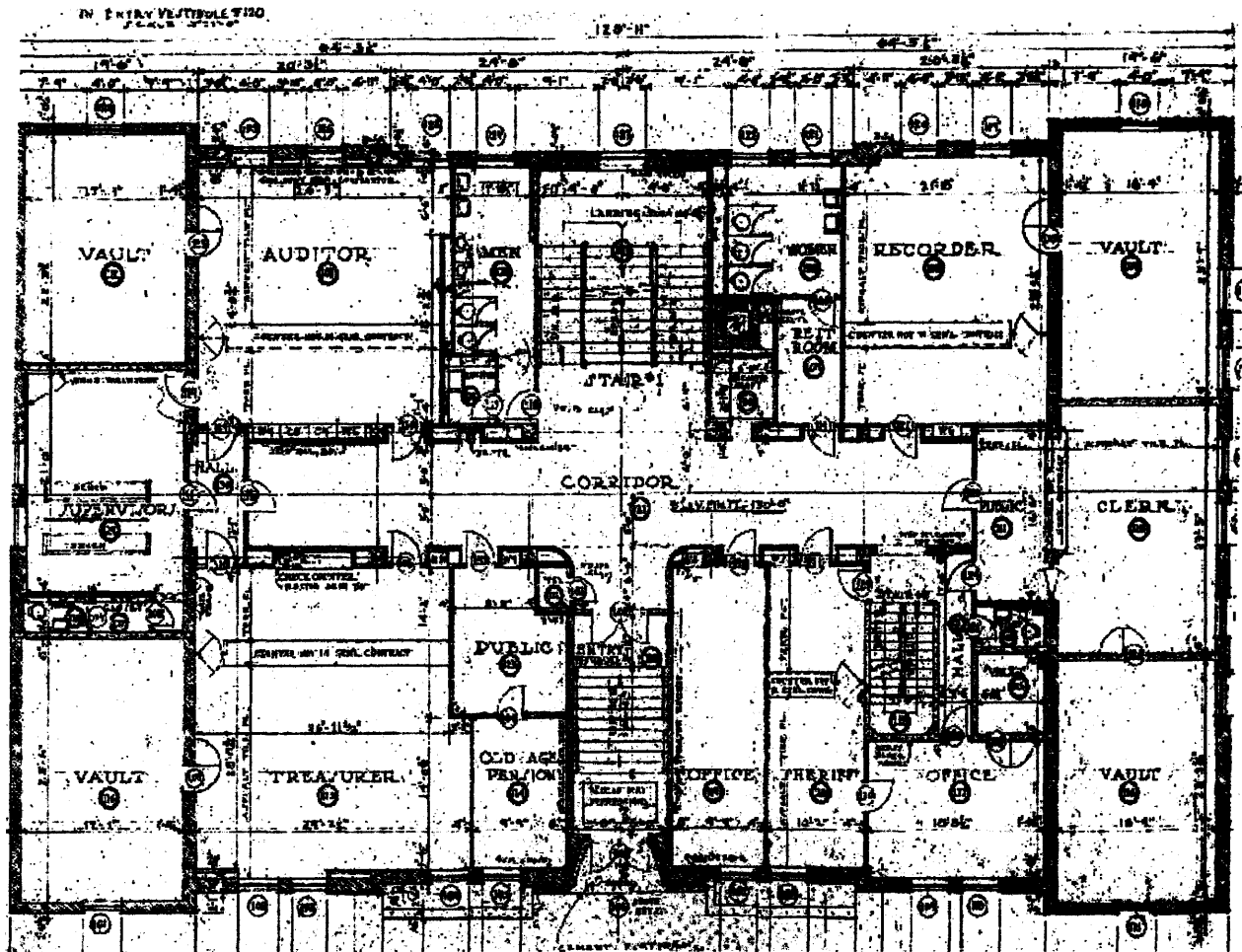
Page 7

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State



Allamakee County Court House, First Floor Plan, 1939



The original sources for plans and drawings reproduced in this and other PWA-Era Courthouse nominations came in various sized formats from original documents, old newspaper clippings, microfilmed newspaper articles, old photo copies, and reverse print images, all of varying quality. The purpose of including images here is to provide a sense of the overall form and delineation of space in the building's principal unaltered floors.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7

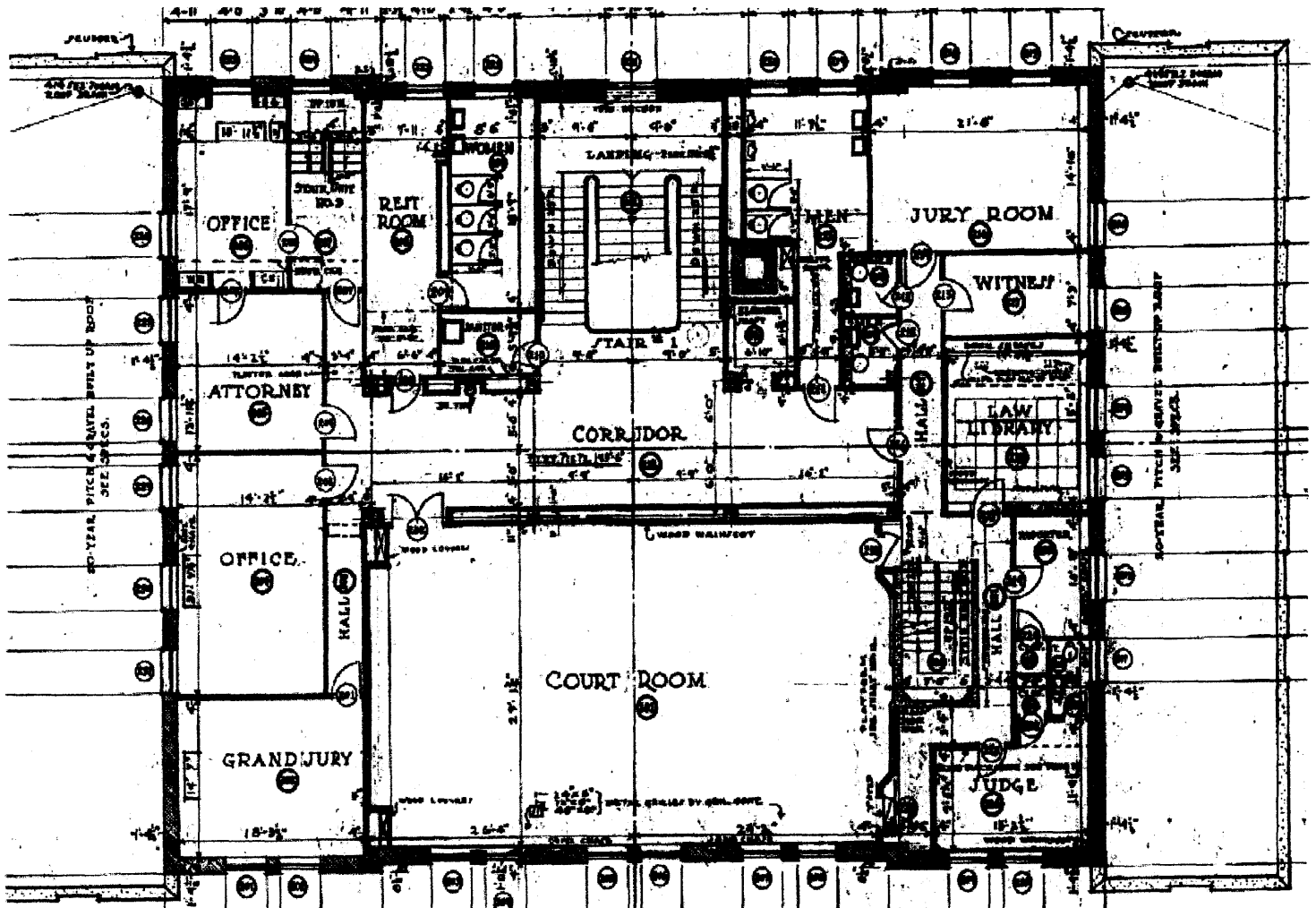
Page 8

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State



Allamakee County Court House, Second Floor Plan (partial), 1939



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7

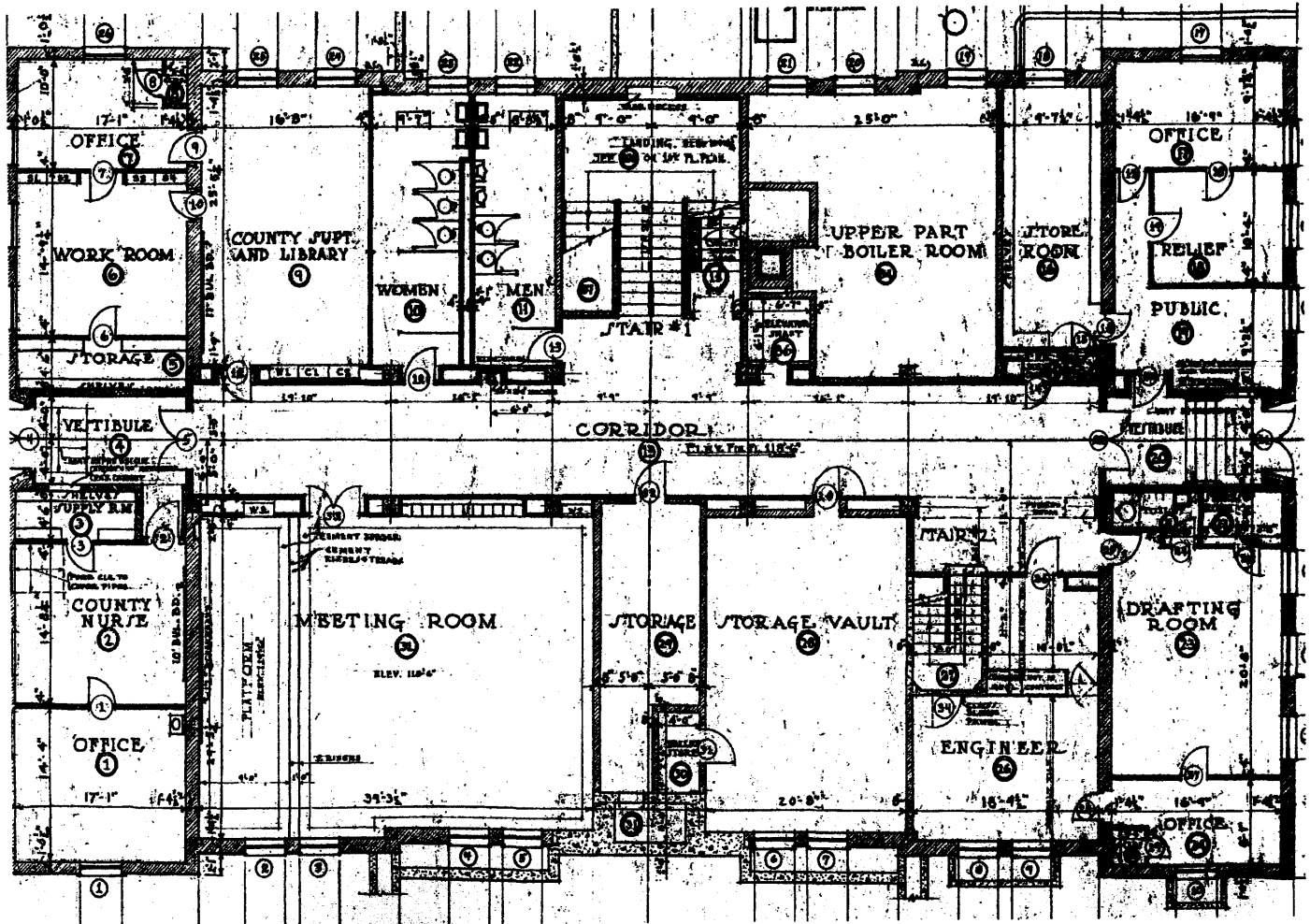
Page 9

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State



Allamakee County Court House, Basement Floor Plan, 1939



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7

Page 10

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

Summary of contributing and non-contributing resources:

All historic resources associated with the courthouse were evaluated according to rules set forth in *National Register Bulletin 16A, How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* (1991). The evaluation was made according to procedures further specified in Section F.v. "Individually Eligible Properties," p. 47 of the PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa MPD. A summary follows.

- 1 Contributing Building: courthouse
- 1 Contributing Site: courthouse site
- 2 Contributing Objects: Civil War Soldiers Monument, flagpole

Summary of alterations:

- Electrical upgrading, 1973
- Removal of acoustic tile in courtroom ceiling and installation of textured plaster, 1980s
- Installation of textured plaster on front vestibule ceiling, 1980s
- Jail security improvements, fire and safety changes, 1982
- Air conditioning added to courtroom, 1988
- Installation of new elevator, 1990
- Remodeling of clerk of district court's office, 1990-1991
- Installation of second magistrate courtroom, 1990-1991
- Reduce basement meeting room and establish new office area, early 1990s
- Replace facing brick on building exterior with matching brick and restored stone, 1993
- New metal windows throughout courthouse replacing glass block (non-original), 1993
- Courtroom remodeling including replacement lights, restoration of wood paneling, and carpet installation, ca. 1997
- Re-roofing, 1997-1998

The changes made to the Allamakee County Court House are consistent with the registration requirements set forth under Section F.iv.c of the "PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa" MPD, pp. F45-F48. The most significant change in terms of potential for impact was the replacement of the exterior facing brick as part of a major exterior rehabilitation of the building completed in 1993. Annual courthouse inspection reports beginning in 1941 soon after the building was completed show that water infiltration in the walls was a problem. The source of the problem was not clearly identified, only the symptoms for many years. By October 1955, the annual grand jury inspection report noted that "considerable work is required on the interior of the courthouse building; but this should not be done until such time as a solution can be found for the waterproofing problem on the exterior of the building." This problem continued to show up in subsequent years. During that time various efforts were made to patch cracks around openings, replace spalling bricks, and repair tuckpointing. Despite piecemeal repairs, by the late 1980s the masonry symptoms continued. In

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7, 8

Page 11

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

some areas the brick deterioration worsened and sections of brick detached from the building. After an engineering study was completed plans were made to remove the existing brick and stone, and then establish improved bearing angles for recladding of the building using the original stone and new brick that matched the original in terms of color and finish. This masonry work was completed in 1993 when more than 103,000 brick were installed. Though the visual impact on the courthouse has been minimal its major size has diminished the buildings architectural integrity. In recognition of this fact, the Allamakee County Court House is not nominated under Criterion C.

A second part of the exterior rehabilitation in 1993 involved replacement of the building's windows. All of the window openings have retained their original size and the original sash configuration. The current set of windows is an improvement in design over the first window replacements, which included glass block in the openings.

The interior changes in the Allamakee County Court House have had a minimal impact. The district courtroom has been rehabilitated in phases during the 1990s with the most substantial change being the installation of carpeting. Efforts have been taken to retain original materials and restore their finishes when improvements were made. The installation of new light fixtures was done by carefully matching the design and scale of the original fixtures.

8. Statement of Significance

Architect/Builder: (continued)

Rye & Henkel Construction Co., Mason City, general contractor
Reliance Engineers Co., St. Paul, MN, plumbing, heating & ventilating
C.J. Smith Electrical Construction, Mason City

Gray & Lynnes, Decorah (1982)
Gardner, Tom, Gardner Architecture, Strawberry Pt., (1992)

Introduction:

The Allamakee County Court House is significant under Criterion A as one of ten county courthouses built in Iowa during the New Deal Era as part of the federal Public Works Administration and its successor agencies. Its construction represented a significant public investment of federal and local dollars by voters in a sparsely populated rural county that was hard pressed by the effects of the Great Depression. Designed by Charles Atfillisch, an important northeast Iowa architect and engineer responsible for the design of a number of PWA funded public buildings, it is an example of the PWA Moderne style of public building architecture developed during the 1930s and early 1940s. Its design blends Art Deco and Moderne elements with the utilitarian advantages of modern office building construction. Nomination of the Allamakee

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8

Page 12

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

County Court House is consistent with the registration requirements set forth in Section F of the "PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa" MPD. Due to the size of the masonry repairs made in 1993, the building is not considered significant under Criterion C.

Historical Background:

i. New Deal Era and the Public Works Administration:

In June 1933 near the end of Franklin Roosevelt's first one hundred days in office, Congress passed the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) creating two important federal initiatives designed to combat the Depression. The National Recovery Administration or NRA was established to set up code agreements with private industries that would encourage greater employment and at the same time, regulate wages and affirm union organizing. The other new agency was intended to serve an emergency role hence the name, Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works. A short time later, President Franklin Roosevelt appointed General Hugh Johnson to head the NRA. During the next two years it would have a fractious history until the Supreme Court struck it down in May 1935.

Roosevelt's second initiative on behalf of industrial workers was intended to serve as an emergency program that would soon outlive its useful life.² He appointed his good friend Harry Hopkins to head the newly established Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and Civil Works Administration (CWA). Responsibilities for the new Public Works Administration (PWA) were assigned to Harold Ickes, Roosevelt's fiscally conservative Secretary of the Interior. The following year the CWA efforts were also transferred to Ickes. Under their direction a series of federal undertakings were given form and substance. Management structures were created, distribution systems organized, administrative practices reorganized, and funding set in motion. By June 1934, Ickes had overseen expenditure of \$3.3 billion to 13,266 federal projects and 2,407 non-federal projects. The popular federal program would see a series of successive appropriations continue for nearly a decade until the PWA was dismantled in 1943. It is this aspect of the NIRA that comprises the balance of this discussion.

It is not surprising that the first public works projects to be funded through the FERA were for federal agencies. The Federal Employment Stabilization Board created in 1931 was responsible for establishing a six-year program of federal construction projects. However, under President Hoover's administration that was as far as the planning had gone. Now, with federal funding in place, many of these construction initiatives were ready to move forward. As a result, Washington, D.C. was among the first cities to benefit from the demand for both skilled and unskilled workers created by these federal programs.

²Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Roosevelt: The Coming of the New Deal* (Boston, 1959), p. 104 as quoted in Lisa B. Reitzes, "Moderately Modern: Interpreting the Architecture of the Public Works Administration, Volume II," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Delaware, May 1989, p. 370.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8

Page 13

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

The other part of the NIRA was intended to stimulate non-federal projects where the national government would serve as a partner with states, local communities, schools, and other non-governmental groups. For these projects to get off the ground, considerable planning would have to take place first. Soon after FERA was established, each state was asked to establish an advisory board with three members. Their purpose would be to stimulate applications for the non-federal funds, forward reports to Washington, and handle requests for funds once they were received. These boards were criticized and by February 1934 were discontinued.³

State level offices staffed by federal employees soon replaced the state boards. These offices were headed by "state engineers" and despite their titles, their responsibility was to the federal government. In a major effort at decentralization, legal, engineering, and financing experts were transferred from Washington to the State Engineer offices. Over time, there were problems with these offices as well. Their titles lead to confusion as local officials sought to learn how to apply for federal assistance and were unclear as to whether the "State Engineer" was a promoter or administrator.

Despite these problems, Congressional appropriations continued annually, each year accompanied by mandated changes in the operation of the PWA program. Among the most important were provisions in the Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 that allowed the federal share of PWA projects to be increased from 30 percent to 45 percent. Another provision allowed the grants to cover the cost of architects and engineers, acquisition of necessary land, legal fees, and administrative costs. By including these costs, more localities were able to participate and the quality of projects was enhanced. An executive order issued by President Roosevelt added the requirement that prevailing wage rates be observed on PWA projects.

When the 1936 appropriation bill came up the following year, Congress expressed its continuing concern for the large numbers of unemployed Americans by enacting new measures in the PWA designed to accelerate the expenditure of PWA funds. Historian Lisa Reitzes summarized the conflict:

...it was widely agreed that, for the PWA to have a visible effect on unemployment and poverty, it needed to move quickly on labor-intensive projects; but Ickes insisted that to produce permanent useful public works whose execution would be economical and free from scandal, the PWA had to move slowly and apply strict standards for inclusion in the program...many in the government believed that the PWA needed to dictate what and where projects were undertaken; however, to enlist local support and ensure the "usefulness" of public works projects, many felt that distribution of PWA funds and designation of construction priorities needed to be guided by local decisions.⁴

³Jack F. Isakoff, "The Public Works Administration," *University of Illinois Bulletin*, Volume XXXVI, (November 18, 1938), p. 36.

⁴Lisa B. Reitzes, "Moderately Modern: Interpreting the Architecture of the Public Works Administration, Volume

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8

Page 14

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

In the end, Congress prevailed seeking to increase the ranks of the employed by speeding up spending on PWA projects. Setting an aggressive timetable for completion of projects did this.

The following year, Congressional sentiment shifted again. Funding under the PWA Extension Act of 1937 was drastically cut and July 1, 1939 set as the date for completion of all projects. The PWA's administrative staff was cut as it moved towards "liquidation" with state offices among the first to be shut down. Although seven regional offices, each with three or more states, had been in place since early in the life of the PWA, they had not had major responsibilities for project oversight.

This changed in the fall of 1937 as the state PWA offices closed. Thereafter, all grant applications, approvals, bidding and contracting, monitoring of wage scales, correspondence, payments, and auditing would flow through the regional offices. Though final authority remained in Washington, the day-to-day management of the PWA shifted to the regional offices. Iowa was one of eight states included in Region No. 4 headquartered in Omaha. Other states in Region No. 4 included Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Missouri. The other regional offices were headquartered in New York, Atlanta, Chicago, Fort Worth, San Francisco, and Portland.

By June 1938 with liquidation measures well underway, Congress reversed itself again. Measures to shut down the PWA were temporarily halted and a new appropriation of nearly \$1 billion was authorized. To keep the money flowing as quickly as possible, the appropriation law specified that new projects must be completed by July 1940.

In early 1939 a series of government publications appeared describing the story of the PWA. Some were designed to respond to criticism of the PWA and others were published to document for posterity the success of this experiment in public works construction. *The Story of PWA* came out in the spring of 1939, the lengthy *Public Buildings: A Survey of Architecture of Projects Constructed by Federal and other Governmental Bodies between the Years 1933 and 1939 with the Assistance of the Public Works Administration* came out later that year, and *America Builds the Record of PWA* came out before year's end.

The PWA officially ended in July 1939 as the focus of the Administration began to shift toward readying for war. President Roosevelt's reorganization plan consolidated the efforts of a number of the "alphabet agencies" under the umbrella of the Federal Works Agency (FWA). It absorbed not only the PWA but also the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Supervising Architect's Office in the Treasury Department (responsible for post office construction), and the U.S. Housing Authority. John M. Carmody was selected to head the new agency. The regional offices continued to operate until 1943 with Iowa projects still in the pipeline managed through the Omaha office through 1941.

ii. *The PWA at Work in Iowa: County Courthouse Building (1934-1941):*

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8

Page 15

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

Establishment of the Public Works Administration in June 1933 prompted formation of a network of 48 state PWA offices. There was no precedent to guide the federal-state-local partnership resulting in considerable time spent during the first months in simply setting up the state offices. Communities were not prepared to respond quickly to a call for PWA projects and as a result, the federal government turned to two other programs to speed federal money into the pipeline – the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the short-lived Civil Works Administration (CWA).

Meanwhile it became clear that antiquated municipal and county laws governing public building and the poor credit ratings of many cities and counties in the wake of bond failures would further prohibit a prompt set of applications. The PWA responded by sending financing and legal experts to states to assist in drafting new state enabling legislation and arranging for federal loan guarantees. Although no history of Iowa's State PWA Office has been written, it is likely that similar problems and responses were experienced there. The acting state director of Iowa's PWA Office by the time the first county courthouse was being planned in Cass County was P.F. Hopkins.⁵ Based on the correspondence record from that office, it appears that he continued in that capacity throughout the office's life.

The process of selecting PWA projects would be the same in Iowa as in other states. Initially applicants would be able to apply for grants amounting to up to 30 percent of the project's costs. Funding could be used for labor and materials but not for project management, architectural and engineering fees, and land acquisition. There would be five "yardsticks" by which local projects would be measured:

1. The social desirability of the project and its relation to coordinated planning.
2. The economic desirability; that is its relation to unemployment and the revival of industry.
3. The soundness of the project from engineering and technical standpoints.
4. The financial ability of the applicant to complete the work and "reasonably secure" any loans by the United States.
5. The legal collectibility of the securities to be purchased or the enforceability of any lease entered into.⁶

In the case of county courthouses, the application would need to be submitted by the county board of supervisors with the actual applications usually prepared by the county auditor. In some Iowa counties, courthouses had been under discussion for years. In the case of Jones County, space for county offices and a courtroom was maintained in rented quarters for more than six decades prior to the completion of the new Jones County Court House in 1937. In Bremer County, the county offices and courtroom were housed in seven buildings including the 1857 courthouse, three banks, and

⁵P.F. Hopkins' familial relationship, if any, to PWA Administrator Harry Hopkins is unknown.

⁶*America Builds. The Record of PWA. Public Works Administration.* Prepared in the Division of Information by the United States, Public Works Administration. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8

Page 16

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

above a hardware store. In the case of three counties, multiple referenda were held to consider building a new courthouse. One unique example involved the Cass County Court House in Atlantic. After a fire destroyed the old courthouse in 1932, a referendum vote was scheduled two months later. Faced with grim economic conditions voters turned down the referendum by a substantial margin. By the time the second vote was held, a citizens group had prompted the board of supervisors to apply for a PWA grant to underwrite a portion of the costs. After the second referendum was held year later, local officials were certain that the availability of a PWA grant had contributed to its passage. In several cases in Iowa when courthouse referenda votes were held in conjunction with a general election they failed. Passage appears to have been more likely when scheduled as part of a special election.

It was necessary for a PWA applicant to provide considerable information about their intended project. The only surviving application for a county courthouse in Iowa is believed to be the application prepared for the Jones County Court House in Anamosa in 1935. It is likely that it was typical of other applications filed. It contained the following:

- a general description of the project
- a statement regarding the status of drawings and specifications
- a breakdown of labor expenses by category of worker, amount, and percentage of grant allotment
- a breakdown of expenses for superintendence, architects, and engineers
- a breakdown of expense for land, materials, equipment, and contingent expenses
- a list of skilled laborers by specific trade and number to be employed
- estimated average worker yearly wage
- estimated total number of man-hours
- estimated daily average number of employees each month for term of the project
- a statement regarding source of other funds and statutory authority to undertake project
- a copy of the application resolution by the board of supervisors
- supplemental information regarding outstanding bonds, borrowing capacity, county population, and assessed valuation⁷

To answer these questions, an applicant-county would need to have preliminary cost estimates in hand. It would be impossible to determine the overall cost figure or any of the breakdowns required in the application without first having a general building plan in hand. To do this it appears that several architectural firms in Iowa were prepared to work for little or no fee during this first phase. In courthouses where Keffer & Jones of Des Moines were involved, the firm signed a contract stipulating that no fee would be charged until the PWA grant was approved and the bonds sold.

⁷Application for Grant, Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, PWA Form No. 175 for Court House for Jones County," dated July 5, 1935, on file in Auditor's Office, Jones County Court House, Anamosa, Iowa.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8

Page 17

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

Their services were limited to preliminary sketches until that time.⁸

The willingness of an architectural firm to work with a county in such a manner allowed two things. First, it enabled the county to prepare an application and respond in an educated manner to the questions posed by federal reviewers. Second, it gave the board of supervisors a building concept and design to promote during the referendum process. If the grants were awarded and the county's voters approved, the architect who had supported the local efforts was likely to secure the design services contract.

Once a PWA application was approved at the state, regional, and national levels, the board of supervisors moved to the next step – the referendum campaign. In virtually every county in the Iowa, these campaigns looked the same. A citizens committee, either formal or informal, undertook a public information campaign to persuade voters of the merits of building a courthouse with the help of a PWA grant. Presentations were given by members of the committee or the board of supervisors to civic organizations. Using the front pages of the local newspapers, articles appeared regularly touting the merit of grants that would underwrite 45 percent of the cost. Voters were encouraged to think themselves fortunate to be able to get more courthouse than their tax dollars would normally buy.

An example of such a campaign was seen on the front pages of the *Indianola Record* in 1936 and 1937. During the summer of 1936 the Warren County Federated Women's Clubs had the courthouse as part of their quarterly meeting. Following the meeting the *Indianola Record* carried an extensive article with the opinions of various members, both pro and con, cited. The newspaper carried similar articles when the Indianola Chamber of Commerce considered it on its several months later. The opinions of those who favored the new courthouse were best summarized in the comments of one Warren County woman when she said that "she had always been taught to take a piece of pie when it was passed to her. She was heartily in favor of constructing a new courthouse now when the county can get a \$145,000 building for \$80,000."⁹ The referendum vote was held in conjunction with the general election in 1936 and failed. Two years later at a special election following a continuing campaign by promoters, the measure passed.

Other pro-courthouse campaign messages stressed the need for a new courthouse to keep records safe. In Cass County, a referendum information pamphlet made the case for approval by pointing out that in Douglas County, Nebraska the county had spent nearly \$300,000 to recreate records lost or damaged in a fire. When Jones County began to make a case for its courthouse in 1935 it contacted Cass County's auditor who happily shared a copy of the information pamphlet.¹⁰ A third reason frequently given for erecting a courthouse in the midst of a national economic

⁸"Agreement between Architects and Owners, for Court House for Audubon County," dated July 29, 1938, on file in Auditor's Office, Audubon County Court House, Audubon, Iowa.

⁹"Women's Clubs Talk Building a Courthouse," *Indianola Record*, July, 1936.

¹⁰"Suggest for the New Court House for Cass County," prepared by the Board of Supervisors of Cass County, Iowa for November 8, 1932 referendum, on file in Auditor's Office, Jones County Court House, Anamosa, Iowa.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8

Page 18

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

depression related to the cost of bonds. Architect Karl Keffer combined all of these arguments when he spoke to the Audubon Board of Supervisors in August 1938. He said that the "primary reason Audubon County should have a new courthouse is because county records are not safe in case of fire in the present building. The secondary reason is that it would be to the county's financial advantage not only to secure the government grant but to take advantage of present low interest rates county bonds carry."¹¹ Keffer's assessment of bond rates proved prophetic when the county was able to secure a favorable rate of just 1¾- percent later that year. This rate was less than half that paid four years earlier in Cass County.

Soon, the success of one PWA-funded courthouse encouraged other counties to undertake the application process. By the time Warren County voters were asked to consider approving a referendum the second time, the *Indianola Tribune* was able to feature photographs of three completed buildings – two were completed with PWA grants in Jones and Cass counties while a third, much smaller building, was erected before the PWA was available in Ringgold County.¹²

The first county to successfully complete the application, referendum, and courthouse construction process was Cass County in southwest Iowa in 1934. Both Governor Clyde Herring and Lieutenant Governor N. C. Kraschel were on hand for the cornerstone ceremony in March 1934 when 1,200 Atlantic school children turned out to greet them. Groundbreaking ceremonies, cornerstone-laying events, courtroom dedications, and courthouse openings were celebrated with parades, keynote speakers, and historical pageants. In most communities completion of the courthouses was viewed as an opportunity to pass the torch from one generation to another and the county's old settlers were given special honors. In all but the last several courthouse completions community boosters used these events to look to better times ahead.

A chronological list of PWA-Era courthouses completed between 1934 and 1941 appears on the following page. All received federal assistance except the Floyd County Court House, which was denied funding when the federal appropriation available for the state ran out.

¹¹"PWA Grant for Court House is Asked by Board," *The Advocate-Republican*, August 4, 1938.

¹²"County Board Reserves Right to Reject Any and All Architectural Plans for Courthouse," *Indianola Tribune*, August 3, 1938.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8

Page 19

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

Figure 2: Chronological list of PWA-Era Courthouses, 1934-1941

County/City Federal Project #	Year Completed	Architect	General Contractor	Original Cost ¹³
Cass Co., Atlantic Federal Public Works Project No. 1410	1934	Dougher, Rich & Woodburn, Des Moines, Iowa	C.C. Larsen Co., Council Bluffs, Iowa	\$130,000
Bremer Co., Waverly P.W.A. Docket IA 1338-R	1937	Mortimer Cleveland, Waterloo, Iowa	Drape Construction Co., Tripoli, Iowa	\$135,000
Jones Co., Anamosa P.W.A. Docket IA 1068-R	1937	Dougher, Rich & Woodburn, Des Moines, Iowa	C.C. Larsen & Sons Co., Council Bluffs, Iowa	\$200,000
Humboldt Co., Dakota City P.W.A. Docket IA 1351-DS	1939	Dougher, Rich & Woodburn, Des Moines, Iowa	Holtze Construction Co., Sioux City, Iowa	\$185,000
Warren Co., Indianola P.W.A. Docket IA 1290-F	1939	Keffer & Jones, Des Moines, Iowa	F.B. Dickinson & Co., Des Moines, Iowa	\$145,000
Audubon Co., Audubon P.W.A. Docket IA 1586-F	1939	Keffer & Jones, Des Moines, Iowa	J.C. Mayer, Clarion, Iowa	\$133,000
Buchanan Co., Independence P.W.A. Docket IA 1447-F	1940	Dougher, Rich & Woodburn, Des Moines, Iowa	C.C. Larsen & Sons Co., Council Bluffs, Iowa	\$254,000
Des Moines Co., Burlington P.W.A. Docket IA 1529-F	1940	Keffer & Jones, Des Moines, Iowa	Paul Steenberg Construction Co., St. Paul, Minnesota	\$280,000
Allamakee Co., Waukon Federal project # unknown	1940	Charles Altfillisch, Decorah, Iowa	Rye & Henkel, Mason City, Iowa	\$202,000
Floyd Co., Charles City Not funded with PWA assistance	1941	Hansen & Waggoner, Mason City, Iowa	James Thompson & Sons, Ames, Iowa	\$265,000

iii. Building the Allamakee County Court House:

Waukon was established as the county seat of Allamakee County after a series of contentious county seat battles, a fight that extended over 25 years with ten elections and several courthouse buildings erected. In 1875 the last county seat election saw Waukon win the election and the building first erected in 1858-1861 in that city become the official county courthouse. The building was located along Allamakee Street north of downtown Waukon opposite a small city park.

Over the next 60 years population in Allamakee County grew from 17,868 in 1870 to a peak of 19,791 a decade later before declining to 16,328 in 1930. With the local farm economy in serious difficulty and hundreds of Allamakee County residents unemployed, a public tragedy struck the county in April 1935. Fire engulfed the main building at the Allamakee County Home killing two residents and leaving the other residents without shelter. The loss presented an especially difficult

¹³Original cost figures include all expenses for completion of the courthouse including site acquisition if applicable, architectural fees, excavation, general contract, subcontracts, furnishings and equipment, and landscaping. Cost figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8

Page 20

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

problem for the county since it was bonded to its limits with no funding available for a replacement structure. The board of supervisors turned to the Iowa PWA Office for assistance but was forced to wait until November 1935 after a new federal appropriation was available for projects. A grant for \$38,000 was secured to rebuild portions of the county home.

The potential for fire at the 75 year old courthouse was on the minds of county supervisors when they determined to make an application for a second PWA grant in 1938. They asked for and received a grant of \$99,000 on August 14, 1938 and set a vote on a county referendum to finance the balance of the courthouse project the following September. The grant would cover 45 percent of the building's cost with the remaining \$105,000 coming from the sale of bonds. County officials were quick to point out to voters that although the amount seemed high, that by bonding for more than \$100,000 the repayment schedule could be spread over 15 years rather than ten years.

On September 22, 1938 voters overwhelmingly approved the courthouse referendum with a favorable vote of 69.8 percent. Unknown to anyone at the time, this would be the last county courthouse built in Iowa with the use of PWA funds. The discontinuation of federal funding for the program would leave courthouse proposals in at least four other Iowa counties on the drawing boards. Architect Charles Altfilisch of Decorah who had been retained to complete preliminary drawings for the building was soon directed to proceed with work on the final courthouse plans. Altfilisch was experienced with the PWA program having completed work on the Waukon High School addition and the Decorah West Side School earlier.

After considering several alternative sites for the new courthouse, a decision was made on October 11, 1938 by the board of supervisors to locate the building in the city park across the street from the old courthouse. To provide for an adequate site, a one-block section of Park Street west of the half-block park was vacated and four residential and commercial lots were added to the future courthouse site. Three buildings on the lots were moved or razed including two houses and a commercial barn. Low bidder for the excavation work was R.J. Cooney and on November 19, 1938 ground was broken on the project. By mid-December, 1939 financing arrangements had been completed. The \$105,000 bond issue was sold to Leo L. Mac, Inc. at an interest rate of just 2½ percent less a premium of \$1,635.

As work proceeded on the courthouse plans, residents of Allamakee County were witnessing the completion of other federally funded projects. As already noted, PWA grants helped fund both the Allamakee County Home (1935-1936) and the Waukon High School addition (1938-1939). According to local newspaper accounts, both the Waukon sewer and waterworks projects were partially funded by the WPA (1938-1939). A new city hall was completed in nearby Lansing using a PWA grant in April 1939. The following month, construction of a new \$80,000 post office in Waukon was begun. It was dedicated the following October with much fanfare as work was underway on the courthouse. Plans for a municipal recreation hall in Waukon went unfunded, however in 1938 when there was a shortage of WPA funds. Despite this continuous flow of federal funding under a national Democratic administration, Allamakee County voted solidly Republican in

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8

Page 21

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

state elections in 1938.

By February 1939 Altfillisch completed plans and specifications for the courthouse, scaling back the building's size to reduce its cost. When bids were received the following month, 20 firms from Iowa, Illinois, North Dakota, and Minnesota submitted bids for the general contract, electrical work, and mechanical work. The general construction contract was awarded to the Tye & Henkel Construction Company of Mason City, Iowa for \$140,422. Contracts were won by Reliance Engineers Company of St. Paul, Minnesota for the plumbing and heating work and by C.J. Smith Electrical Construction Co. also of Mason City for electrical work.

Construction commenced a short time later with the foundation ready for laying the cornerstone on May 25, 1939. Remarks at the ceremonies were presented by Judge H.E. Taylor and the cornerstone was filled with a variety of items including a copy of the November 1937 Grand Jury Report that specified the problems in the old courthouse.

By early June, newspaper accounts noted that work on the courthouse was behind schedule by about a month due to strikes among steel manufacturers and stone workers. Superintendent O.W. Woodward indicated that material shortages were slowing work on selected items such as the elevator shaft and stone facing work. He noted that other aspects of the project including carpentry work and bricklaying were on schedule.¹⁴ By October 1939 construction was making steady progress with officials estimating that work would be completed early the following spring.

Throughout the course of construction, the federal government required that workers be paid minimum wages based on the prevailing wages for various trades. At the national level this measure had been established to stabilize wage rates and make sure that public works contracts did not see workers suffer in a competitive environment. For the Allamakee County Court House project, several dozen trades were represented in the workforce. The highest paid workers were structural ironworkers. Their rates were followed by bricklayers, plumbers, steam fitters, sheetmetal workers, asbestos workers, plasters, and terrazzo workers. Making slightly less were carpenters, electricians, glaziers, painters, roofers, cement finishers, and hoist operators. The poorest paid workers were truck drivers, teamsters, and helpers for various trades.

As construction continued on the courthouse, supervisors were kept busy reviewing equipment plans and bids for the jail, offices, and courtroom. Minor changes were made to the main construction contracts as well with the total cost for land, building, furnishings, and related services totaling \$201,983. County residents were pleased with the new courthouse but the Republican underpinnings of the electorate showed through later that year when the *Waukon Republican and Standard* endorsed Wendell Wilkie for president and GOP candidates were given wide margins in the November 1940 elections. The last official act in completing the courthouse came on June 18, 1941 when a new flag pole was erected in front of the building.

¹⁴"Court House Is Behind Schedule," *Waukon Republican and Standard*, (Waukon, Iowa), June 7, 1939.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8

Page 22

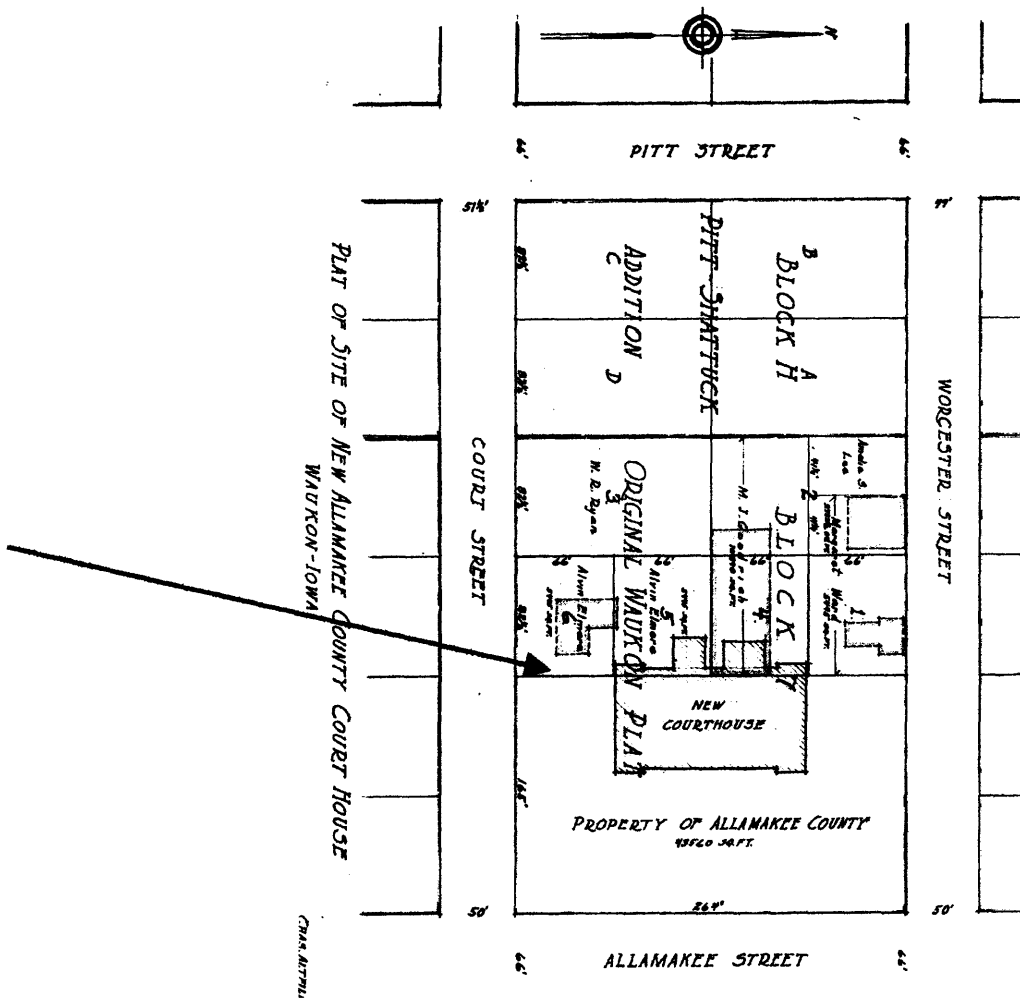
Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

A plat map showing the courthouse site before and after construction of the new building appears below.

Plat of Site of New Allamakee County Court House, 1939¹⁵

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iv. Architectural background:

The Allamakee County Court House was designed by Charles Atfillisch (1892-1978), a native Iowan who after obtaining degrees in both engineering and architecture set up his practice in

¹⁵“Plat of Site of New Allamakee County Court House,” prepared by Charles Atfillisch, architect, June 1939.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8

Page 23

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

Decorah at the end of World War I. His work included a wide variety of building types with commissions principally located in Allamakee, Winneshiek, Howard, and Fayette counties in northeast Iowa. His work included residences, schools, hospitals, swimming pools, gymnasiums, and city halls.

During the 1930s he completed a number of public building designs in the Moderne Style including the Allamakee County Court House. Other buildings employing this style were the West Side Elementary School, Middle School Gymnasium, and Municipal Swimming Pool, all in Decorah, the Calmar Public School, the Postville City Hall, and the Lansing City Hall. All of these examples except for the swimming pool were rendered in brick and stone. During the same decade he began to develop a preference for the use of reinforced concrete and concrete block. Many of these designs took on the International Style. Altfillisch's commissions included a number of collegiate buildings. The campus of Luther College in Decorah held several of his designs as did the University of Iowa campus in Iowa City.

Charles Altfillisch designed only one PWA-Era courthouse in Iowa for Allamakee County. Erected in 1939-1941, its basic plan and form were typical of other Moderne Style courthouses built during the decade but its decorative embellishments were more simply stated. It was constructed of brick with Bedford limestone for trim and its exterior design differed little from the other PWA-Era courthouses in the state. Its interior had a similar central corridor arrangement with offices, central staircase, etc. but its finishes subtly differed from treatments found in other PWA-Era courthouses. The interior color palette was shades of black, gray, and white with the terrazzo floors laid out in larger squares set in fields surrounded by narrow borders. Public corridors were given simple plaster and marble finishes and plain, low-maintenance aluminum handrails were employed rather than painted decorative wrought iron and brass. Altfillisch's engineering background is evidenced in an overall utilitarian design of the interior spaces and finishes in the Allamakee County Court House. More problems have been associated with the exterior finish of this PWA-Era courthouse than any other, however.

Summary:

In summary, the Allamakee County Court House derives its significance under Criterion A as the last county courthouse built in Iowa during the New Deal Era with funding assistance from the federal Public Works Administration. Its construction represented a significant public investment of federal and local tax dollars made at a time when this rural county was hard pressed by the Great Depression. Designed by Charles Altfillisch, it is also an example of the PWA Moderne Style of public building architecture that dominated the 1930s and early 1940s.

Acknowledgement:

Preparation of this nomination was funded with the assistance of a matching grant-in-aid from the State Historical Society, Community Programs Bureau through the Department of the Interior,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8, 9

Page 24

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

National Park Service, under the provision of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior or the State Historical Society of Iowa, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior or the State Historical Society of Iowa.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 9

Page 25

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 9

Page 26

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

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"Problem is Now How to Replace the County Home," April 24, 1935.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 9.10

Page 27

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

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- "Waukon Sewer & Waterworks," November 23, 1938.
- "Excavation for Courthouse Begun," November 23, 1938.
- "W.P.A. Rejects Plans for Waukon Recreation Hall," December 21, 1938.
- "Waukon Post Office Construction Begins," January 4, 1939.
- "New Addition to Waukon High School to be Dedicated; Funded by PWA Grant," January 25, 1939.
- "Bids Asked for Court House," February 15, 1939.
- "Expected Cost for Court House to be \$190,000," March 1, 1939.
- "Contract for Court House Awarded to Mason City Contractor," March 15, 1939.
- "Lay Cornerstone of Court House," May 31, 1939.
- "Court House Is Behind Schedule," June 7, 1939.
- "Progress Is Made on Court House," October 18, 1939.
- "Flagpole Set at Court House," June 18, 1941.

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description:

Includes Lots 1,4,5,6 of Block H7, Pitt Shattuck's Addition; City Park (bounded by Park Street (vacated), 2nd Avenue NW, Allamakee Street and 1st Avenue NW) in the Original Town Plat of Waukon; and the vacated one-block section of Park Street between 1st and 2nd avenues, all in the town of Waukon, Allamakee County, Iowa.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries comprise the original site for the current Allamakee County Court House. This site includes all of the publicly owned land, purchased property and vacated city street that was acquired for construction of the new Allamakee County Court House in 1938-39.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

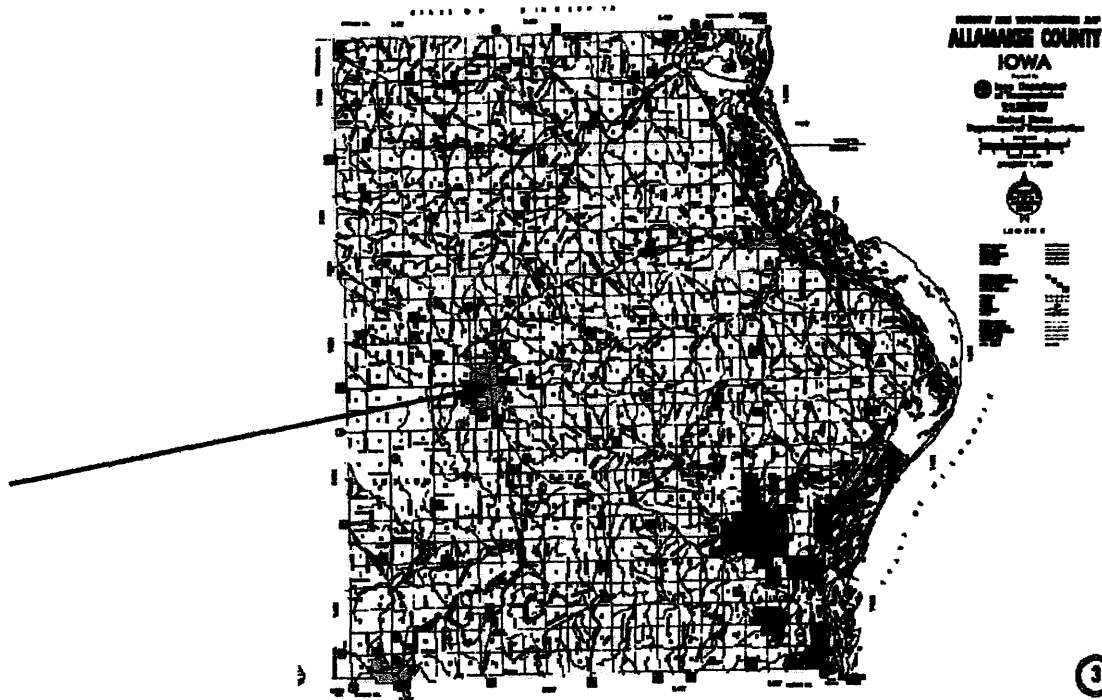
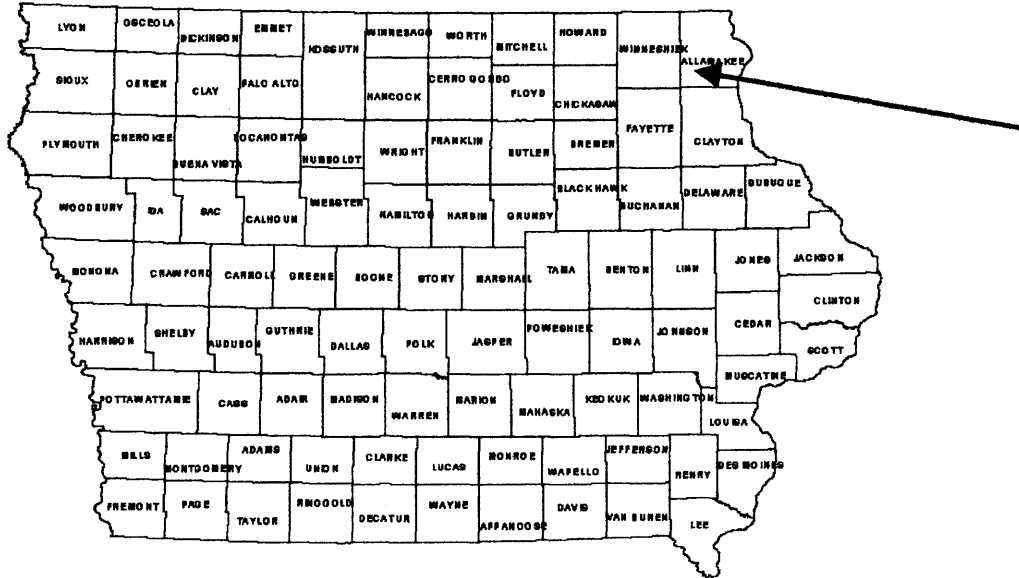
Section Number Maps

Page 28

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

Map: Allamakee County, Iowa



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

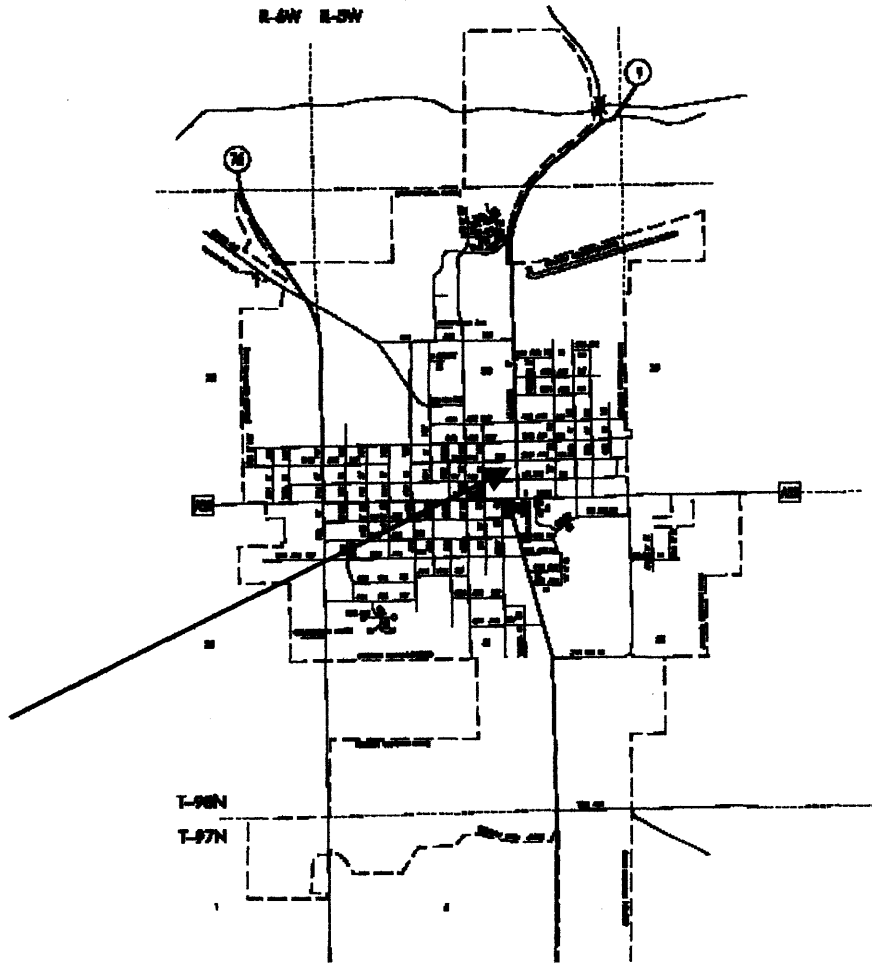
Section Number Maps

Page 29

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

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LEGEND

UNIMPROVED ROAD	RAILROAD
IMPROVED ROAD	RAILROAD CROSSING
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MADE BY JOHN
DATE OF SURVEY
SCALE OF SURVEY

**ROADWAY AND STREET MAP
OF
WAUKON
IOWA**

DIVISION OF
IOWA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
DIVISION OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING
OFFICE OF TRANSPORTATION DATA

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section Number _____ Photographs _____

Page 30

Allamakee County Court House
Name of Property

Allamakee County, IA
County and State

Photographs

Bruce Meyer, photographer
Date taken: October 23, 2002

1. Front & south façades, looking northwest
2. Rear & south façades, looking northeast
3. Rear & north façades, looking southeast
4. Front façade, entrance, looking west
5. Front entrance vestibule, looking east
6. Central corridor, first floor, looking north
7. Central staircase, between first and second floors, looking northwest
8. Central staircase, from landing between first and second floors, looking southeast
9. Courtroom, towards front of room, looking north
10. Courtroom, judge's bench, witness stand, and recorder's desk, looking northeast
11. Courtroom, jury box, looking northwest
12. Courtroom, towards rear of room, looking south
13. Courthouse site, front façade including flagpole, looking west