

MAY 29 1981

JUL - 2 1981

# IOWA SITE INVENTORY

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

Site Number 38-010-001  
District Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Map Reference # 38-010-001  
Topo Map Waterloo NK 1:250,000

## IDENTIFICATION

1. Site Name Grundy County Courthouse
2. Village/Town/City Grundy Center Township \_\_\_\_\_ County Grundy
3. Street Address Grundy Avenue between 8th & 7th Sts.
4. Legal Location OT 18  
Urban: subdivision block parcel  
Rural: township range section  
1/4 section-1/4 section
5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 518800 northing 4689400; Acreage less than 1 ac
6. Owner(s) Name Grundy County Board of Supervisors
7. Owner(s) Address \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)  
Grundy Center Iowa 50638
8. Use: present Courthouse original Courthouse

## DESCRIPTION

9. Date of Construction 1891-93 Architect/Builder Kramer & Zoll, Architects  
Seeley, Son & Co., Builders
10. Building Type:  single family dwelling  multiple family dwelling  commercial  
 industrial  educational  other institutional  public  religious  agricultural
11. Exterior Walls:  clapboard  stone  brick  board & batten  shingles  stucco  
 other \_\_\_\_\_
12. Structural System:  wood frame with interlocking joints  
 wood frame with light members (balloon frame)  masonry load-bearing walls  
 iron frame  steel frame with curtain walls  reinforced concrete  
 other \_\_\_\_\_
13. Condition:  excellent  good  fair  deteriorated
14. Integrity:  original site  moved - if so, when? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site:  
Tympana at entrances, and window transom panels filled in - storm windows and doors - tile roof replaced with asbestos, 1957 - exterior sandblasted.
15. Related Outbuildings and Property:  barn  other farm structures  
 carriage house  garage  privy  other \_\_\_\_\_
16. Is the building endangered?  no  yes - if so, why? \_\_\_\_\_
17. Surroundings of the building:  open land  woodland  scattered outbuildings  
 densely built-up  commercial  industrial  residential  other \_\_\_\_\_
18. Map \_\_\_\_\_
19. Photo  
 Roll \_\_\_\_\_ Frame \_\_\_\_\_ View \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNIFICANCE** (Indicate sources of information for all statements)

**20. Architectural Significance**

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure  c. Not eligible/intrusion

Good vernacular example of Richardsonian Romanesque. Clock tower is a prominent feature; its slender form balances the otherwise weighty mass of the courthouse itself.

**21. Historical Significance**

Theme(s) Politics/Government

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure  c. Not eligible/intrusion

This courthouse is locally significant as the historical focus of county government, and of the political power and prestige derived from the community's status as the county seat. As center of county government, an Iowa town was reasonably assured of economic and population growth, and a prominent role in local social and political life. The county courthouse represents a significant public investment in a structure built not simply for utilitarian purposes, but also as a monument associated with the historical importance of county organization and development. Replaced an octagon-shaped courthouse before 1870.

See Continuation Sheet

**22. Sources** (for primary and secondary sources, give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.):

- Andreas, A.T. Illustrated Historical Atlas of Iowa. Chicago: Andreas Atlas Co., 1875.
- Pratt, LeRoy G. The Counties and Courthouses of Iowa. Mason City, Iowa: Klipto Printing and Office Supply Co., 1977.
- Stanek, Edward and Jacqueline. Iowa's Magnificent County Courthouses. Des Moines: Wallace-Homestead Book Co., 1976.

Prepared by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Organization \_\_\_\_\_

<b>FOR DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION USE ONLY</b>	
<b>1. OFFICE INFORMATION SOURCES ON THIS PROPERTY</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COUNTY RESOURCE FILE	<input type="checkbox"/> REVIEW AND COMPLIANCE PROJECT:
<input type="checkbox"/> WINDSHIELD SURVEY	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> NATIONAL REGISTER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____
<input type="checkbox"/> GRANTS-IN-AID: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____
<input type="checkbox"/> DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____
<b>2. SUBJECT TRACES</b>	<b>3. PHOTO IMAGES</b> <u>573/1-3</u> <u>359/28A</u>
a. _____	_____
b. _____	_____
c. _____	_____
d. _____	_____
e. _____	_____

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Site Number \_\_\_\_\_

## CONTINUATION SHEET

Item Number(s)

### GRUNDY COUNTY

The land in Grundy County originally belonged to Benton and Buchanan counties. In 1851, the territory was divided and Grundy County was organized in 1856. The original county business in the county seat of Grundy Center was carried out in what was known as the "Old Cheese Box". It was built in 1857 and had the unique feature, unlike other county courthouses in the State of Iowa, of being octagonal in shape. Mounted in the center of the flat roof which capped the two-story structure, was an octagonal cupola with each face paralleling a given wall of the main building.

It wasn't until about forty years later when the county committed itself to erecting a more substantial courthouse. This second and present courthouse was finished in 1891, with the following itemized cost:

Cost of building .....	\$37,797.50
Heating apparatus.....	2,032.00
Electric wiring .....	100.00
Courtroom and office furniture...	2,731.20
Vault furniture.....	1,231.78
Safe .....	450.00
Frescoing.....	1,000.00

Total.....\$45,432.48

During the construction of this imposing stone castle, the contractor realized that his bid to the county was much too low. But he was honest and remained faithful to his commitment, using the best material and workmanship, even though he went bankrupt on the job. The original construction was of such good quality that even today, after more than 85 years of use, the courthouse is in nearly its original state.

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