

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 36-024-001
District Name _____
Map Reference # 36-024-001
Topo Map Neb. City NK 1:250,000

IDENTIFICATION

1. Site Name Fremont County Courthouse
2. Village/Town/City Sidney Township _____ County Fremont
3. Street Address Clay Street between Illinois and Indiana
4. Legal Location OT Courthouse Square
5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 276800 northing 4513700; Acreage less than 1 acre
Urban: subdivision block parcel subparcel
Rural: township range section 1/4 section-1/4 section
6. Owner(s) Name Fremont County Board of Supervisors
7. Owner(s) Address Sidney Iowa 51652
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: present Courthouse original Courthouse

DESCRIPTION

9. Date of Construction 1889 Architect/Builder _____
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:
Sandblasted: once covered with stucco - rear entrance widened, aluminum doors added - aluminum windows.
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

This is a rather plain courthouse for its period. Chief features are the entrance porch, with round round arches on squat, medieval-looking columns; and brick wall dormers with triangular pediments and oculus windows. Note original oak staircase.

21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) Politics/Government

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

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

See Continuation Sheet

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

Andreas, A.T. Illustrated Historical Atlas of Iowa. Chicago: Andreas Atlas Co., 1875.

Pratt, LeRoy G. The Counties and Courthouses of Iowa. Mason City, Iowa: Klipto Printing and Office Supply Co., 1977.

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

Prepared by _____ Date _____
Address _____ Telephone _____
Organization DHP

FOR DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION USE ONLY

1. OFFICE INFORMATION SOURCES ON THIS PROPERTY

COUNTY RESOURCE FILE

WINDSHIELD SURVEY

NATIONAL REGISTER

GRANTS-IN-AID: _____

DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY

REVIEW AND COMPLIANCE PROJECT:

OTHER _____

OTHER _____

OTHER _____

2. SUBJECT TRACES

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

3. PHOTO IMAGES _____

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Item Number(s) _____

FREMONT COUNTY

On Iowa's southwestern extreme is Fremont County, organized in 1850. The first county seat was situated at Austin, a town which consisted of two houses, about 7½ miles south of the town of Sidney. Seated upon nail kegs or boxes, participants in the first sessions of court were hosted by A. H. Argyle in his storeroom in one of those two houses.

On May 10, 1851, the county seat was moved to Sidney, where a \$40,000 courthouse was constructed in 1860. The brick building which was large for its time had a heavy brick tower and a tin roof which capped its second story. The construction was financed by the sale of swampland and was regarded by an 1875 history as one of the finest buildings in western Iowa. One winter day in 1863, a merchant reported that two and one-half kegs of gunpowder had been stolen. The whereabouts of these kegs was unknown until about nine o'clock on a November night. All the windows and doors in the courthouse were blown from the structure and the entire upper floor and roof were thrown out of place. The county spent a considerable amount of money to repair the damages, but the fissures left in the wall increased in size in the years which followed.

The present brick courthouse was built in 1889, as evidenced by the numerals affixed over the arch above the main entryway. The courthouse is relatively simple but full of character. Between short granite columns at the front of the building are cement steps that have become concave with wear from the many thousands of footsteps placed upon them over the past three-quarters of a century.

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