

IOWA SITE INVENTORY

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

MAY 29 1981

Site Number 54-028-001
District Name _____
Map Reference # 54-028-001
Topo Map Sigourney 1:24,000

IDENTIFICATION

1. Site Name Keokuk County Courthouse
2. Village/Town/City Sigourney Township _____ County Keokuk
3. Street Address Main Street between Washington & Marion Streets
4. Legal Location OT 5
Urban: subdivision block parcel subparcel
Rural: township range section 1/4 section-1/4 section
5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 566580 northing 4575850; Acreage less than 1 ac
6. Owner(s) Name Keokuk County Board of Supervisors
7. Owner(s) Address Keokuk County Courthouse Sigourney Iowa 52591
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: present Courthouse original Courthouse

DESCRIPTION

9. Date of Construction 1909-11 Architect/Builder Wetherell & Gage, Architects
J.L. Simmons, 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:
Aluminum sash windows and entrance.
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

A generally well-preserved Neoclassical courthouse, well sited on public square. Each facade characterized by a frontispiece featuring giant engaged Ionic columns set in acutis above first floor level. Interior mainspaces retain many original features.

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 January, 1980
Address _____ Telephone _____
Organization DHP

FOR DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION USE ONLY

1. OFFICE INFORMATION SOURCES ON THIS PROPERTY

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input 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 _____ |

2. SUBJECT TRACES

- a. _____
b. _____
c. _____
d. _____
e. _____

3. PHOTO IMAGES 256/1-2, 259/4,

248/31-39, 247/7-9, 244/12-14,

330/19-27.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Keosauqua

Item Number(s) _____

(from Stanek, cont.):

rented in downtown Concord and place them in the Garner courthouse, where they remain today. The only major architectural change that has been made since 1899 is the truncation of the tall outstanding tower.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Item Number(s) _____

KEOKUK COUNTY

The commissioners appointed to find an appropriate location for the county seat of Keokuk County made their decision on May 10, 1844. The first courthouse to be built by the county in 1845, at this place on the prairie now called Sigourney, was constructed at a cost of \$218. It was a hewn log house, 20 by 24 feet, with the logs hewn to a thickness of seven inches and notched down at the corners. The building also served as a jail, schoolhouse, meeting house, public hall, and a hotel for immigrants. In 1873, the old courthouse was moved from Sigourney to a farm two miles east of town to be used as a cow stable.

Lancaster became the new county seat in the late 1840s and it became necessary to build a new courthouse at that location. A 20 by 30 foot two-story frame structure was completed in the summer of 1848 at a cost of \$699. This courthouse also served as a public hall. It was here that the bitter political campaigns, waged by the county Democrats, Whigs, and Freesoilers in 1848 and 1852, were headquartered.

The county seat was moved back to Sigourney in the middle 1850s. Business of the county was housed in different buildings around the square while litigation was pending over the permanent location of the county seat. The question was resolved in 1857, and construction of a new courthouse was begun. The county judge was responsible for the plans and specifications, cost, and material. He discharged his duties admirably and his work was never questioned. The building was completed in 1858 at a cost of \$17,200. An addition was erected in 1892 at a cost of \$3,980. The building was again improved and remodeled in the summer of 1897.

The present elegant courthouse with its tall clock tower and cupola, was completed in 1910 for \$150,000.

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