

IOWA SITE INVENTORY

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

MAY 29 1981

Site Number 68-002-001
District Name _____
Map Reference # 68-002-001

Topo Map Des Moines NK 1:250,000

IDENTIFICATION

1. Site Name Monroe County Courthouse
2. Village/Town/City Albia Township _____ County Monroe
3. Street Address Main Street Between Benton and Washington
4. Legal Location OT 8
Urban: subdivision block parcel
Rural: township range section
subparcel
1/4 section-1/4 section
5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 516200 northing 4541800; Acreage less than 1 acr
6. Owner(s) Name Monroe County Board of Supervisors
7. Owner(s) Address Courthouse Albia Iowa 52531
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: present Courthouse original Courthouse

DESCRIPTION

9. Date of Construction 1903 Architect/Builder O.O. Smith, Des Moines, Arch. James Rowson & Sons, 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:
Clock tower roof lowered - aluminum sash windows - portion of large arched window at front filled in.
Many original counters and metal grilles remain - also woodwork.
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

The style of this courthouse is basically derived from the neoclassical, but the heavy rockfaced exterior is from the earlier Richardsonian Romanesque. Loss of original tower spire causes this feature to appear "vestigial", rather than a significant element in the composition. A notable feature is the large round-arched window above the main entrance, with a modified Gibbs surround and decorative site window panels with triangular lights.

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 254/2-3, 250/23-24,
245/27, 336/21-26

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

CONTINUATION SHEET

Item Number(s) _____

MONROE COUNTY

The board of commissioners of Monroe County (then called Kishkekosh County) developed a plan for the first county courthouse on August 17, 1846. The building was constructed to be 20 feet square and 14 feet high. In those days, construction work was more of an art than a science. The specifications called for logs hewn upon two sides, "notched at the corners in a good and workmanlike manner". The logs were not to be more than three inches apart at the corners. The natural ventilation facilitated by this manner of construction was enough to cause the county board to adjourn its meeting on January 4, 1847, and re-open it at the home of a hospitable citizen.

In order to provide privacy for the jurors when considering their verdict, a half-story above the courtroom was provided which the jury could conveniently reach by climbing a ladder. The old courthouse was used until 1860 when it was torn down and the logs split into boards which were used to build a sidewalk around the square.

From 1851 to 1861, the county was ruled by the sole county judge instead of the board of commissioners. Under the blunt rule of Judge James Hilton, a new courthouse was ordered to be built in the center of the town park, despite considerable opposition. Two architectural designs were submitted for the building and the local newspaper proclaimed that Judge Hilton chose the worse of the two. It was constructed in the medieval style of the Tudors.

The present Monroe County courthouse, fashioned from attractive heavy stone, was built for approximately \$100,000. Its cornerstone was laid on August 29, 1902.

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