

PH035098X

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	FEB 4 1977
DATE ENTERED	AUG 29 1977

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC  ~~AND/OR COMMON~~ **Mitchell County Courthouse**

## LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 500 State Street

CITY, TOWN: Osage

STATE: Iowa

VICINITY OF: Mitchell

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Third

COUNTY CODE: Mitchell

## CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

## OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME: Mitchell County

STREET & NUMBER: 500 State Street

CITY, TOWN: Osage

STATE: Iowa

## LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Mitchell County Courthouse, Recorder's Office

STREET & NUMBER: 500 State Street

CITY, TOWN: Osage

STATE: Iowa

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE:

DATE:

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

CITY, TOWN:

STATE:

—FEDERAL —STATE —COUNTY —LOCAL

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Mitchell County Courthouse was built in four phases, from 1858 to 1926. The first phase, covering the years 1858-60, contributed the main block of the complex. It is constructed of brick, laid in common bond, resting on a stone basement. It is a prostyle temple-form block with a tetrastyle Doric portico facing north across a large green. Stylistically, the portico can be described as vernacular Greek Revival overlaid with a touch of Italianate (the brackets). The order of the portico shows a number of peculiarities which can be attributed to vernacular misunderstanding of classical correctness. The fluted columns rest on unmolded circular plinths set above the stereobate. They are enormously attenuated for their height and out of proportion with the bulky capitals, the echinus of which is widely splayed. The abacus is octagonal in shape, perhaps the most striking peculiarity of the order used here. A fairly complicated talon has been substituted for the usual Doric taenia, and tryglyphs and metopes in the frieze have been replaced with coupled brackets above each column. The full entablature is repeated in the raking cornice; in the tympanum of the pediment has been inserted a segmental attic window.

The portico is complemented by the front entrance, a smaller distyle portico in-antis. The door itself is surrounded by side- and top-lights which provide crucial lighting for a hallway which runs the entire 72' length of the building. The styler treatment of the front is continued around the sides of the building by the brick wall pilasters which divide the side elevations into 5 bays. A full entablature is carried around, as are also the coupled brackets.

Windows throughout the building are 2/2 double hung sash, and finished with triangular headed stone lintels set flush with the walls. Windows on the second floor are tall, narrow and floor length, and when juxtaposed with the shorter windows of the main floor appropriately mark the second floor, the courtroom floor, as the more important of the two.

Above the pediment rests a lantern, set well in front of the front wall of the building. It is square in plan, each elevation divided into two bays, and rests on a low square drum. It is crowned by a hipped roof which is convex in profile. The stylistic mix of the portico is repeated in the lantern. The framework of the square stage aspires to be Greek, with engaged colonnettes dividing the bays and supporting an abbreviated entablature which sports a continuous row of guttae under the frieze. Again, there is the overlay of Italianate -- each colonnette is topped by coupled brackets and the whole is finished with a segmental pediment. A third style is added in the lights, which are Gothic lancets.

The original plan was straightforward in the extreme. A wide central corridor ran the entire length of the building, with the stairs to the second floor to the rear. To the east side of the corridor were the treasurer's and clerk's offices; to the west were auditor and recorder. The second floor housed a spacious court room, 48' x 44', the axis of which was set at right angles to that of the building, and two chambers for the convenience of the judge and jury.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

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Mitchell County Courthouse -- Osage, Mitchell County, Iowa

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

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The 1879-82 building phase added short, two-bay, two-story wings to either side of the main block. The west wing was built first in 1879, and housed vaults for treasurer and clerk on the main floor and an office for the county engineer above. The east wing followed in 1872 and housed vaults for recorder and offices for the county superintendants above. Later the superintendents' office was moved to the south wing and the east wing remodeled to accommodate judge's and attorneys' rooms. The wings are remarkably harmonious with the architecture of the earlier main block. Their mass is kept diminutive in scale so as not to detract from the presence of the main block. Materials of wall and basement are the same, and the watertable is continued at the same level. The cornice was necessarily abbreviated, but the treatment of the windows -- sash, lintel and sill -- reproduces that of the earlier windows. The roofs are hipped, eliminating the necessity of gable treatment on the end elevation.

In 1926 the third building phase added a short wing to the rear to accommodate the assessor's office. Within the past ten years, this office has been moved to the north end of the auditor's office, and the first floor of the south wing was devoted to storage for the assessor and restroom facilities. Other remodeling over the years divided the second floor into two courtrooms and a number of offices. Interior furnishings have been renewed periodically, and around 1900 the old woodwork was removed and replaced with oak finish and yellow pine wainscoting in the halls. This was recently replaced with panelling. Original floors remain, although they are now covered with carpeting in the offices and tile in the halls.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES 1858-60, 1879, 1882, 1926 BUILDER/ARCHITECT ~~XXXXXXXX~~ (main block): John Bishop, John Robb, Jacob L. Chase

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Architectural significance of the Mitchell County Courthouse rests primarily on its late use of the Greek Revival style for a public building, and the rarity of monumental Greek in Iowa. This courthouse, and the courthouse for Lee County, are the only temple-form courthouses in the state. It has further interest due to the use of pattern-book precedent, along with free vernacular experimentation and adaptation, and to the suggestive mixture of elements of different styles -- late Greek overlaid with contemporary Italianate and Gothic -- typical of vernacular builders.

The various additions to the courthouse, and the continuous rearrangement of the interior illustrate the growing complexity of county government over a century of Mitchell County history. The first plan reflected the relative simplicity of early county administration: an office each for the auditor, clerk, recorder, and treasurer, with one large courtroom and chambers for judge and jury. Gradually the amassing of documents and records prompted the construction of vaults for each county officer, plus the creation of space for a new office, that of assessor. Above these vaults, the newly-created county engineer found space. The development of the "supervisor" system of county government meant that meeting space had to be found to accommodate these elected officials. Today, the upper floor houses two courtrooms, and the whole courthouse contains a wide variety of offices for officials, secretaries, and attorneys, reflecting the many activities of present-day county government.

Although the Mitchell County Courthouse was completed (the first phase) by 1860, it did not become the permanent location of county government until 1870. For those intervening ten years, and for some years before that, the location of the county seat was the subject of intense political rivalry between Osage and the town of Mitchell.

Mitchell County was organized in 1854, though technicalities prevented its "legalization" by the state legislature until 1855. In that year, a commission chose Mitchell, slightly northwest of Osage, as the county seat. A referendum in 1856 gave the honor to Osage, but the decision was contested in court. Before a decision could be reached by the Iowa State Supreme Court, a second commission confirmed Osage as the county seat. The courthouse at Osage was begun about this time, but by the time of its completion in 1860 yet another referendum had resulted in the retention of county government at Mitchell. The following year voters approved Osage by 19 votes, but Mitchell obtained an injunction to keep the county records, until the case was finally settled in favor of Osage in 1870. During this long period, the county records and government operations seem to have remained in Mitchell, where a stone building, privately financed served as the courthouse. The building at Osage housed attorneys' offices and the Cedar Valley Seminary between 1860 and 1870.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

History of Mitchell County, Iowa. Springfield: Union Publishing Co., 1883.  
 History of Mitchell and Worth Counties, Iowa. Osage: Woolverton Printing Co., 1918.  
 Proceedings, Mitchell County Board of Supervisors (items compiled by Dorothy Cook,  
 County Auditor)  
 Publication of the County Auditors' Association, March 1967

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 5	5 1 5 1 1 0	4 7 9 1 9 9 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

W.H. Biedermann, County Liaison Officer for Historic Preservation

ORGANIZATION

Mitchell County Historical Society

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

R.R. 4

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Osage

STATE

Iowa 50461

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Adrian D. Anderson*

TITLE Director, Division of Historic Preservation

DATE

1/31/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Tom Hunter*

DATE

8/29/77

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

*Charles Anderson*

DATE

8-22-77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER