

IOWA SITE INVENTORY

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

Site Number 75-012-002
 District Name _____
 Map Reference # 75-012-002
 Topo Map Sioux City NK 1:250,000

IDENTIFICATION

1. Site Name Plymouth County Courthouse
2. Village/Town/City LeMars Township _____ County Plymouth
3. Street Address 3rd Avenue East between 2nd Street South & 3rd Street South
4. Legal Location OT 35
Urban: subdivision block parcel
 Rural: township range section
5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 732000 northing 4741300; Acreage less than 1 acre
6. Owner(s) Name Plymouth County Board of Supervisors
7. Owner(s) Address Courthouse LeMars Iowa 51031
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: present Courthouse original Courthouse

DESCRIPTION

9. Date of Construction 1901-02 Architect/Builder Kinney & Detweiler, Arch. Emil Miller, 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 Sandstone
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 removed 1932 - aluminum sash and doors, but painted to blend with sandstone exterior.
Note ceramic tile floor in mainspace - handsome double staircase of wood approached through a wide column screen.
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

Principal features of this courthouse are the giant pedimented tetrastyle portico using the Ionic order and the use of sandstone as exterior wall facing. Sandstone is used on other Iowa courthouses, but is generally rockfaced and occurs on buildings reflecting Richardson's Romanesque motels. In this courthouse, it is used much as Bedford limestone was on others of that period: smoothly-dressed or rusticated.

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. Site of locally-significant events associated with milk strike, Farm Holiday movement and foreclosures, 1932-33.

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

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

CONTINUATION SHEET

Item Number(s)

PLYMOUTH COUNTY

Information about the first courthouses in Plymouth County is very sparse. During the time court was in session in 1867, the county seat was located at Melbourne. Just before the court convened, the chairman of the county board ordered that the courthouse be put in order, cleaned, and repaired. Henry Morf petitioned to use a portion of the courthouse to operate a grocery store. The county board gave him that liberty without charge for one year, provided he left it in a condition as good as when he took it.

In September of 1872, a group from LeMars offered to furnish suitable county offices if the county seat were moved to their town. The county seat was relocated and the county officers moved into a building erected specifically for them in April of 1873. This building was only intended to serve as temporary quarters for two years.

At the April, 1874, meeting of the county board, \$3,000 was appropriated to build a new courthouse, while the old courthouse at Melbourne was sold for \$31. The planned \$3,000 courthouse was to be complete with furniture and painted by December of 1874.

As the size and needs of the county population grew, it was inevitable that a larger courthouse would be needed. At the general election in November, 1900, the board of supervisors was authorized by their constituents to build a new county building at LeMars at a cost not to exceed \$70,000. Emil Miller, a local contractor, submitted the most satisfactory bid and was awarded the contract which called for Portage-entry red sandstone to be used for the entire facing of the courthouse. The building was turned over to the board of supervisors on June 5, 1902. Today its exterior remains nearly as it was then except that its large, attractive cupola has been removed.

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