

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 90-031-002
District Name _____
Map Reference # 90-031-002
Topo Map Ottumwa N. 1:24,000

IDENTIFICATION

- 1. Site Name Wapello County Courthouse
- 2. Village/Town/City Ottumwa Township _____ County Wapello
- 3. Street Address Court between Harlan and 4th
- 4. Legal Location OT 4 91 & 92
Urban: subdivision block parcel
Rural: township range section
1/4 section-1/4 section
- 5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 549560 northing 4540910; Acreage less than 1 ac
- 6. Owner(s) Name Wapello County Board of Supervisors
- 7. Owner(s) Address Courthouse Ottumwa Iowa 52501
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
- 8. Use: present Courthouse original Courthouse

DESCRIPTION

- 9. Date of Construction 1892-94 Architect/Builder Foster & Liebbe, Des Moines, Arch. C. Stanford, Bldr.
- 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 doors main entrance - many windows filled in from inside - 1950 tower, chimeys and various turrets cut down, apparently for structural reasons.
Note original wooden staircase, ceramic tile floors in mainspaces.
- 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

An example of courthouse design in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. Loss of vertical emphasis through removal of tower, turrets, finials, etc. accentuates ponderous massiveness. Voussoirs of arches above main entrance are very crudely cut. Exterior wall surfaces highly textured. Note state of Chief Wapello atop front gable.

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.

Prepared by Des Moines: Wallace-Homestead Book Co., 1976. 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 110/1, 253/2, 253/4
244/1-6, 251/3-9 and 18-24, 337/7-12.

CONTINUATION SHEET

Item Number(s)

WAPELLO COUNTY

The first building to be used as a Wapello County courthouse in Ottumwa was a crude one-story un-hewn log cabin. The building was covered with clapboards to help protect the occupants from the elements. This primitive building was torn down after a short time to make way for a more modern structure.

The first building actually labeled a "courthouse" was built by the county for \$1,000 in 1846. It was a frame structure, two stories high, and had a square base measuring 24 by 24 feet. The first floor was used to hold court sessions, religious services, political meetings, dances and school. The second floor served as county office space. In 1851 the county board of commissioners removed the courthouse from the care of the county judge, placed it in the hands of the county Sheriff, and banned dancing from the premises. In 1855, this building was sold to the Christian Church as a place of worship. Eventually it was sold to W. C. Grimes to be used as a factory for manufacturing wagons. It was consumed by fire on October 22, 1872.

The second county courthouse was a 40 by 60 foot two-story brick building which cost \$13,000. The courtroom served not only to try cases, but also as a theater, lecture hall, opera house, and as a place of worship for poor church organizations. Although it was the site of many historic occasions, including an assembly of citizens aroused to arms when Fort Sumpter was fired upon, it was torn down in 1891 to make way for the present courthouse.

With Masonic rites, the cornerstone for the new building was laid on September 28, 1892. This courthouse is made of rough-cut sandstone and measures about 101 feet by 94 feet. The Indian chief Wapello, heroically stands on a pedestal which rests upon a gable high above the main entry. The \$135,000 castle was dedicated on May 17, 1894.

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