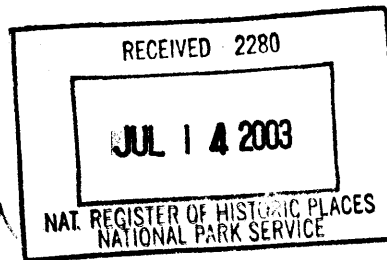


JUL 10 2003

NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

819

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

Name of Property

historic name Cass County Court House

other names/site number Federal Public Works Project No. 1410

2. Location

street & number 5 W. 7th Street N/A not for publication

city or town Atlantic N/A vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Cass code 029 zip code 50022

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally (see continuation sheet for additional comments).

Howell J. Salko July 10, 2003
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
 entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

**Entered in the
National Register**

Signature of the Keeper

AUG 28 2003

Date of Action

determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure
	<input type="checkbox"/> object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>		buildings
<u>1</u>		sites
	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>1</u>		objects
<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa MPD

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/courthouse

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/courthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/ PWA Moderne

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

STONE/limestone

roof ASPHALT

other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1934 - 1953

Significant Dates

1934

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Dougher, Rich and Woodburn

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Cass County Auditor's Office

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than 5 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	[1][5]	[3][3][1][6][1][1][0]	[4][5][8][5][2][7][0]	2	[][]	[][][][][][]	[][][][][][][]
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
3	[][]	[][][][][][][]	[][][][][][][]	4	[][]	[][][][][][][]	[][][][][][][]
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mariys A. Svendsen, Svendsen Tyler, Inc.

organization for State Historical Society of Iowa date January 2003

street & number N3834 Deep Lake Road telephone 715/469-3300

city or town Sarona state WI zip code 54870

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the complete form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Cass County, c/o Dale Sunderman, Auditor

street & number 5 West 7th Street telephone 712/243-4570

city or town Atlantic state IA zip code 50022

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Cass County Court House
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7. Description

Site: The Cass County Court House (contributing) was built in 1934 on the courthouse square in Atlantic, Iowa located between West 7th Street on the north, West 8th Street on the south, Polar Street on the West and Chestnut Street on the east. The courthouse site (contributing) is located immediately south of City Park. U.S. Highway 6 and State Road 83 extend along West 7th Street along the north side of the square. The courthouse square is an elevated site with slopes extending down from building to both the north and east. The courthouse is set back from the front sidewalk approximately 110 feet. Curved 5-foot wide sidewalks connect the front entrance to West 7th Street. The previous county courthouse stood on this site prior to a fire but no historic archeological investigation was made to determine the presence of foundations or other building remains. The flagpole (contributing) which is believed to be the original erected, is placed approximately 50 feet from the building's front entrance. Mature deciduous and coniferous trees are scattered across the north side of the square. Angled parking spaces line the curbs along Chestnut and Poplar streets and an asphalt paved parking lot extends along the rear of the building adjacent to West 8th Street. A small brick two-bay garage (contributing) is built into the southwest corner of the parking lot. Its brick matches that of the courthouse and it is believed to have been constructed shortly after the courthouse was erected. Its flat roof is level with the sidewalk and street. A freestanding communications tower (non-contributing) used by the county sheriff's department is located at the southeast corner of the building and was constructed sometime within the past 25 years.

Chestnut Street serves as Atlantic's main retail street connecting the courthouse and City Park on the south with the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad Depot six blocks to the north. A mix of one and two-story masonry buildings lines Chestnut Street with several churches located at the south end. Soldier's Monument located at the center of City Park opposite the courthouse was constructed at the end of World War I in 1919 and has subsequent veteran's memorials added near the base.

Exterior: The Cass County Court House is one of ten courthouses built in Iowa during the federal Public Works Administration (PWA) program's operation in the 1930s. It has a rectangular footprint with the original building erected in 1934 measuring 135 feet by 70 feet and a correctional facility wing added at the west end in ca. 1984 measuring approximately 70 feet by 83 feet. The front of the courthouse faces north. The courthouse has a poured concrete structure with a brick and stone facing. The foundation is clad in Bedford limestone while the walls are faced in glazed gray-colored brick set in a light gray-colored mortar. Decorative cut stone is also Bedford limestone.

Front elevation: On the front or north elevation, the building's central section is seven bays wide with a height of 3½-stories or approximately 38 to 40 feet. Original 1-story wings half the height of the central section are located at the west and east ends of the building. A raised basement extends beneath the entire building. The correctional facility wing at the west end has two levels that line up with the basement and first floor. The central section's wide bays are separated by stepped brick pilasters that extend from the top of the dentiled stone band the forms the window

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lintels for the first floor windows to the tops of the courtroom windows on the third floor. Cast-bronze lettering over the three center bays reads "Cass County Court House." Applied metal grills create decorative patterns on the two-story windows. Cut-stone designs are found in blocks beneath each of the center windows including a classic Art Deco eagle beneath the center window. Vertical cuts appear in the stone window lintels. The stone cornice consists of a series of rounded horizontal bands with widely spaced square blocks containing simple floral designs. Water damaged facing brick in areas across the front façade above the three center windows was replaced with matching brick in 1999.

The entrance steps are constructed of limestone and are centered on the front elevation between solid cut-stone balustrades. Only the top landing is constructed of concrete. The building's original light standards have an Art Deco design with a white opaque glass lantern set atop an open metal base. They are set on the top tiers of the stone balustrades adjacent to wall on each side of the entrance steps and remain operable.

The original front entrance double doors have a bronze and copper finish. They are set beneath a clear glass transom that has its original Art Deco patterned grillwork intact. Brickwork to either side of the entrance is a series of receding stepped sections. A 3-sided projecting metal entrance hood has an Art Deco Style fan design. The dentils above the fan pattern are continued in the stonework to either side of the canopy.

Beneath the front entrance steps are exterior entrances to the basement level. These single door entrances have semicircular arched multi-light doors and are reached via a single flight of stairs located along the west and east sides of the front entrance steps. These stairs have their original wrought iron handrails and one-inch square spindles in the balustrades.

All of the courthouse's windows except for the three tall windows in the center three bays are replacement sash. The new sash were installed in 1979-1980 and are fabricated of metal with a brown finish. Each unit is configured with a transom or infill panel in the top and a 1/1 double-hung window in the lower two-thirds. Because most of the building does not have central air conditioning, window AC units are installed in some of the upper panels. All of the windows have stone sills and lintels of varying dimensions. The three tall units have their lights painted on the interior with rigid insulation and drywall panels installed on the inside to close the openings.

Side elevations: The east and west elevations were originally identical but differ since the addition of the correctional facility wing in ca. 1984. The 3-story sections remain unaltered, each with six narrow windows separated by slightly projecting brick walls. Vertical brick wall panels to either side of the windows and the horizontal stone coping and cornice stones are the only decoration. The 1½-story wing on the east end is a miniature version of the 3-story façade. A second 1½-story wing was added to the west end in ca. 1984. It is constructed of matching glazed gray-colored brick and has a nearly identical horizontal curved band at the cornice level. Its use for law-enforcement purposes has eliminated the need for windows. A single entrance at the basement level is centered

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on the façade.

Rear elevation: The rear or south elevation is a less formal, more functional version of the front façade. It is divided into nine bays with brick and stone work matching the balance of the building. A replacement entrance door with sidelights and transom are set beneath a metal canopy in the center bay. Ramped sidewalks approach the entrance from both directions although the designated handicapped entrance is through the correctional facility at the west end of the building. New windows in the rear elevation are of a similar design to others replaced in ca. 1979-1980.

Interior Floor Plan: The Cass County Court House has a central corridor plan similar to those of the other nine PWA-Era Courthouses in Iowa. The front and rear entrances located midway along the north and south façades open into entrance vestibules set between the basement level and the first floor. On the interior, these vestibules are set perpendicular to the central corridor, which runs the full length of the building. Individual county offices outfitted to meet the needs of specific county functions open onto the public corridor. Circulation between floors in the courthouse is via the central staircase located opposite the front entrance vestibule and the secondary staircases located in the southeast and southwest corners of the building. An elevator shaft was designated in the original plan but the elevator was not added until sometime prior to 1978. The elevator is located adjacent to the central staircase in the west corridor. The district courtroom is located on the second floor and the county jail is located in the west end of the basement and in the correctional facility wing. Design elements and finishes for the most important spaces in the courthouse are discussed in greater detail below.

Entrance vestibules: The front entrance vestibule has two-tone terrazzo floors (black borders with a gray field that includes black, gray, white and terra cotta-colored chips) with walnut paneled walls set on a 24 inch black marble baseboard. The permanent commemorative plaque on the east wall is constructed of a dramatic black marble with a changeable type sign on the west wall. Triple gray metal pieces set as vertical dividers separate the wood panels on either side of the plaque and sign. A decorative plaster cornice with a plaster shell and half diamond band extends along the ceiling. The ceiling light is a replacement fluorescent fixture. The outer doors have a bronze finish and the inner doors are constructed of wood. The radiators are set in recessed openings with metal grates featuring tulip patterns. The grates have a faux green marble/granite finish.

The rear vestibule opens into the building midway between the basement and first floor levels. The floors are black terrazzo with a recessed area in the center designed to hold an absorbing floor pad. Walls are plastered with a wood mid-rail. Separate single doors flank a wide horizontal window leading to the rear side of the central staircase. Two stair runs along the side walls lead up to the first floor and a double-wide run in the center leads down to the basement. Handrails and balustrades match those of the central staircase described below.

Public corridors: The first floor corridor has a two-tone terrazzo floor (black border and gray field) and base (black). The walls have a textured plaster surface with a two-tone glazed finish separated

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by a wood chair rail. The lower half has a dark brownish-gold colored glaze and the upper half is a lighter shade of the same hue. The colors were carefully reproduced as part of a project completed in 1987. A decorative plaster cornice consists of half diamonds with scrolled patterns set between two narrow borders. The central sections of the ceiling in the public corridor are clad in the original "Celotex" acoustic tile (12 inch squares) used elsewhere in the building as well as other PWA-Era courthouse projects. Fluorescent lights (non-original) and ceiling fan fixtures are suspended along the corridor in both directions. All office doors opening onto the corridor are wood with full-length glass panels and brass hardware. The trim is painted metal and the recessed radiator covers are identical to the tulip grill patterned grills in the front entrance vestibule, including the faux green marble/granite painted finish. Clear glass transoms above the doors retain their original county office signs using Sans Serif lettering.

The second floor corridor is finished in a similar manner as the first floor with a few exceptions. The lower half of the wall is textured wood glazed finish in colors similar to the first floor. The offices at the end of each corridor are accessed through a pair of doors set inside a semi-circular arched opening. Those at the east end of the corridor include the judge's chambers, law library, and jury room. The basement corridor has a lower ceiling height with a mix of original and new openings and doors. The walls have a flat plastered finish with no glazing.

The third floor formerly served as the jail with offices for the sheriff's department. In 1984 after the correction facility wing was constructed, the third floor was vacated. Since that time various remodeling projects have reconfigured this space with a lowered acoustic tile ceiling, carpeting, plastered walls, and new openings, doors and hardware. Roof damage caused damage to a number of offices in 1999 resulting in additional remodeling. The only remnant of the sheriff's department in this space is the break room for building workers in the southwest corner where cabinetry from the former kitchen in the sheriff's residence has been retained.

County offices: Each of the county offices contains a service counter at which public business is transacted, a public lobby in front of the counter, a staff work area to the rear of the counter, one or more private offices, and a tile-lined vault space for storage of records. In some cases, internal circulation hallways, restrooms, meeting rooms, conference rooms, and storage areas are also included in the county offices. Walls are plastered with wood chair rails. Flooring is a combination of terrazzo and asphalt tile in the public areas and asphalt tile and carpeting (non-original) in the non-public areas. Restrooms off the main corridor have been modified with new fixtures, divider walls, and dropped ceilings. The original two-tone gray and gray/white terrazzo floors have been retained.

Central staircase: The central staircase is located midway along the south wall of the central corridor opposite the front entrance. The staircase features a central, double-wide run leading up to a wide landing between flights with return runs along the walls leading from the main landing to the second floor. From the first floor, the runs along the walls lead down to a landing, part of which also serves as the rear vestibule. From here separate runs extend down into the basement level. The

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treads and risers are made of light gray terrazzo and the stairs have a wrought iron balustrade painted with a green faux marble/granite finish to match the radiator grills. A brass handrail sets on top of the wrought iron balustrade. The balustrade pattern includes simple square posts mixed with scroll design sections. Similar scroll design pieces are set at 90 degrees to the balustrade overhanging the stair runs along the outer walls. The pattern of the balustrade is repeated in the radiator grills on the landing between the first and second floor. The stairwell walls continue the textured plaster and two-tone glazing of the first and second floor corridors. Oversize windows at the landing provide abundant light for both the first floor and second floor corridors.

Courtroom: The most important space aesthetically and functionally in a courthouse is usually the courtroom. The Cass County Court House's district courtroom is located on the second floor facing the front of the building (north). It has a two-story ceiling height that extends into the third floor with original floor dimensions of 52 feet by 30 feet. The judge's bench, witness stand, clerk's desk, and reporter's desk are located in the east end of the room with the jury box on the left or north side. Spectator seating in the west half of the room consists of a series of walnut pews placed theater style with a center aisle. A walnut railing serves as the bar between the spectator area and counsel tables. The original aluminum gate has been removed in order to provide wheel-chair access.

A 5-foot tall wainscoting fashioned of walnut panels extends around the perimeter of the room. Above the wainscoting along the south end the walls are finished with wide vertical strips of textured plaster that were originally glazed with a gold-brown color similar to that found in the central corridors. These textured strips alternate with faux walnut paneling. In 2000 following a major roof leak, the walls were repainted off-white with the alternating vertical strips of grained paneling retained. Along the north wall three large window openings originally brought significant natural light into the courtroom. Glazed textured plaster filled the spaces between the windows. In 2000, these openings were filled with insulation and covered with gypsum board. The openings were then painted with a grained finish to match the faux wood paneling on the opposite wall.

The ceiling is covered with acoustic tile installed in 2000 that replaced earlier "Celotex" tile. A wide plaster cornice extends around the perimeter of the room and includes a complex Art Deco design combined with a course of dentils, crown moldings, and a key border – all glazed in muted shades of green, gold, and silver-gray. Six matching original light fixtures are suspended from the ceiling. Each consists of a tall cylinder of white glass surrounded by vertical glass pieces set at 90 degrees to the cylinder glass. Each fixture originally had 12 bulbs and to provide more light, each fixture has now been modified with the addition of a metal cylindrical light at the bottom.

The "niche" or recessed wall at the front of the courtroom behind the judge's bench has a dramatic finish consisting of quarter sawn, matched walnut panels laid in a "fiddle-back" pattern. According to newspaper accounts, all of the walnut pieces on this wall were cut from one tree brought from Cincinnati, Ohio.¹ Vertical fluted sections between the panels are aluminum strips. Ornamental Art Deco styled sections along the upper portions of the niche walls are actually plaster casts finished to

¹"Beautiful New Structure is Most Complete," *Atlantic News-Telegraph*, undated, 1934.

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match the walnut panels. Recessed lighting panels enhance the dramatic effect of the niche's design elements.

Walnut paneling set on a black marble base is used to form the jury box, judge's bench, witness stand, and desks at the front of the courtroom. A common molding design is used along the top of all of these stationary parts as well as the wainscoting, bar railing, and pew ends. It has a handsome basket weave pattern that features a combination of ebony, holly, and mahogany inlay. The jury box has its original seating with some of the pedestal chairs retaining their caned seats and others having been upholstered. The walnut pew seating was refinished along with other elements in the courtroom in 2000.

The judge's chambers, law library, jury room, and other related offices are located along the east end of the second floor. They are accessed through doors located to either side of the judge's bench or through a separate access at the end of the central corridor. The doors in these rooms have textured glass lights in their upper halves.

Floor plan: As originally conceived, the principal county offices for the Cass County Court House were to be located on the first and second floors with unassigned space reserved for expansion in the basement. The first floor included offices for the board of supervisors, the auditor, treasurer, recorder, clerk, and sheriff. The second floor contained the courtroom, judge's chambers, law library, jury rooms, attorney's office, and county superintendent's office. The third floor contained the sheriff's residence, dormitory rooms for women and men jurors, and the jail. The basement contained an additional storage vault, a large assembly room, a war veterans' room, a social worker room, and space for the county engineer.

During the past several decades in a series of small to medium sized, phased remodelings the original allocation of space in the courthouse has been altered somewhat. Changes were based on the obsolescence of certain offices (county school superintendent) and functions (sheriff's residence and dormitory space for jurors). In other instances, the expanded needs of specific offices were accommodated by the allocation of vacant areas (assessor's office). Changes made to meet access requirements were done within the original space allocations (rest rooms) or through sensitive alterations (addition of sidewalk ramps). Construction of a new addition to house the correctional facility in 1984 was done using appropriate materials (similar brick and Bedford limestone trim) and design treatments (non-principal façade, distinctly different window and door treatments, correct scale). The former jail area on the third floor had experienced significant changes through the years as jail operations changed. Conversion of this already modified space to additional county offices did not alter significant, intact building features. Selected floor plans prepared in November 1933 prior to the courthouse's construction appear below.²



²Floor Plans by Dougher, Rich & Woodburn, (at Auditor's Office, Cass County Court House), November 1933.

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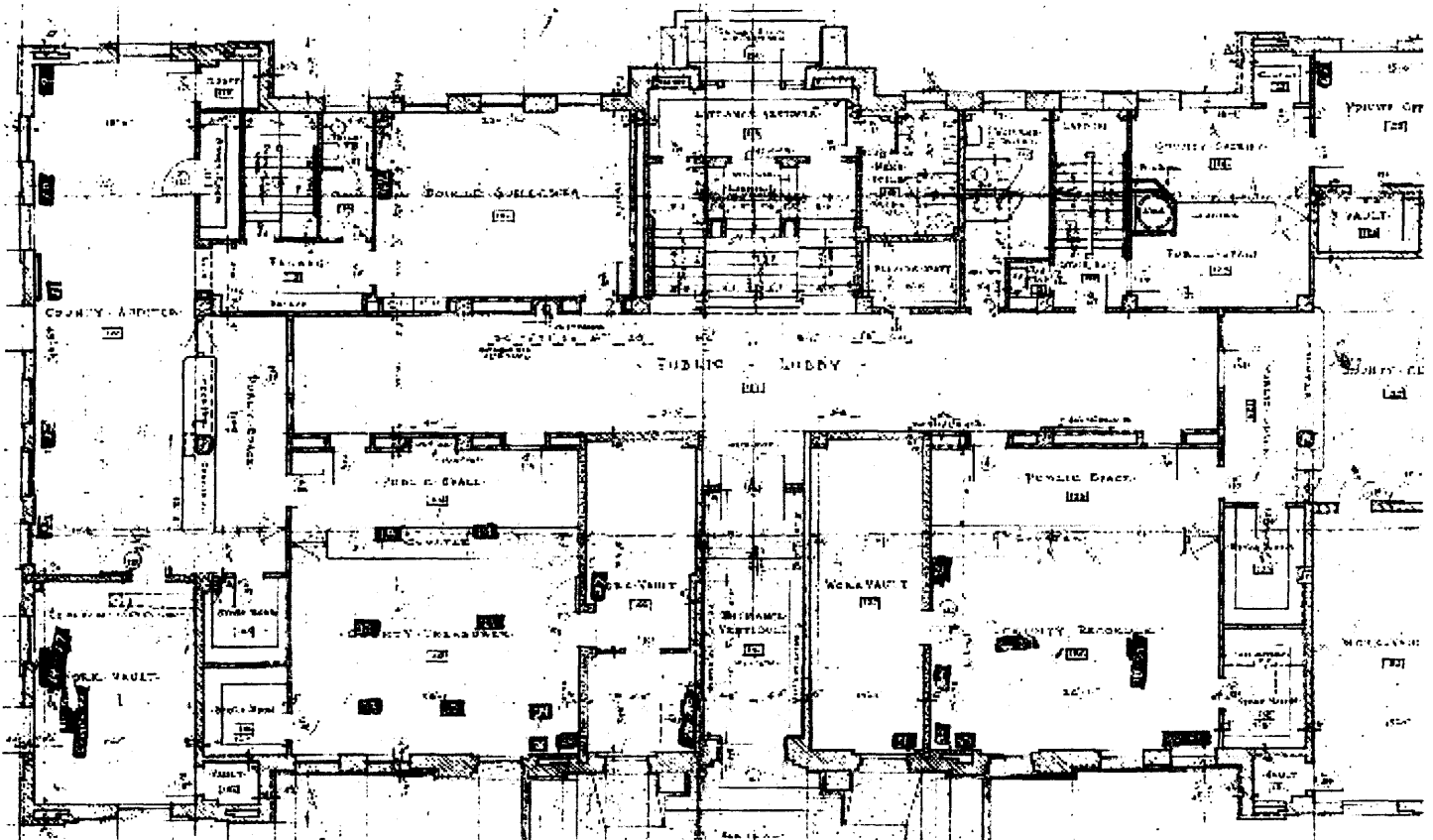
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Cass County Court House
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N

Cass County Court House, First Floor Plan (partial), 1933³



³The original sources for plans and drawings reproduced in this and other PWA-Era Courthouse nominations came in various sized formats from original documents, old newspaper clippings, microfilmed newspaper articles, old photo copies, and reverse print images, all of varying quality. The purpose of including images here is to provide a sense of the overall form and delineation of space in the building's principal unaltered floors.

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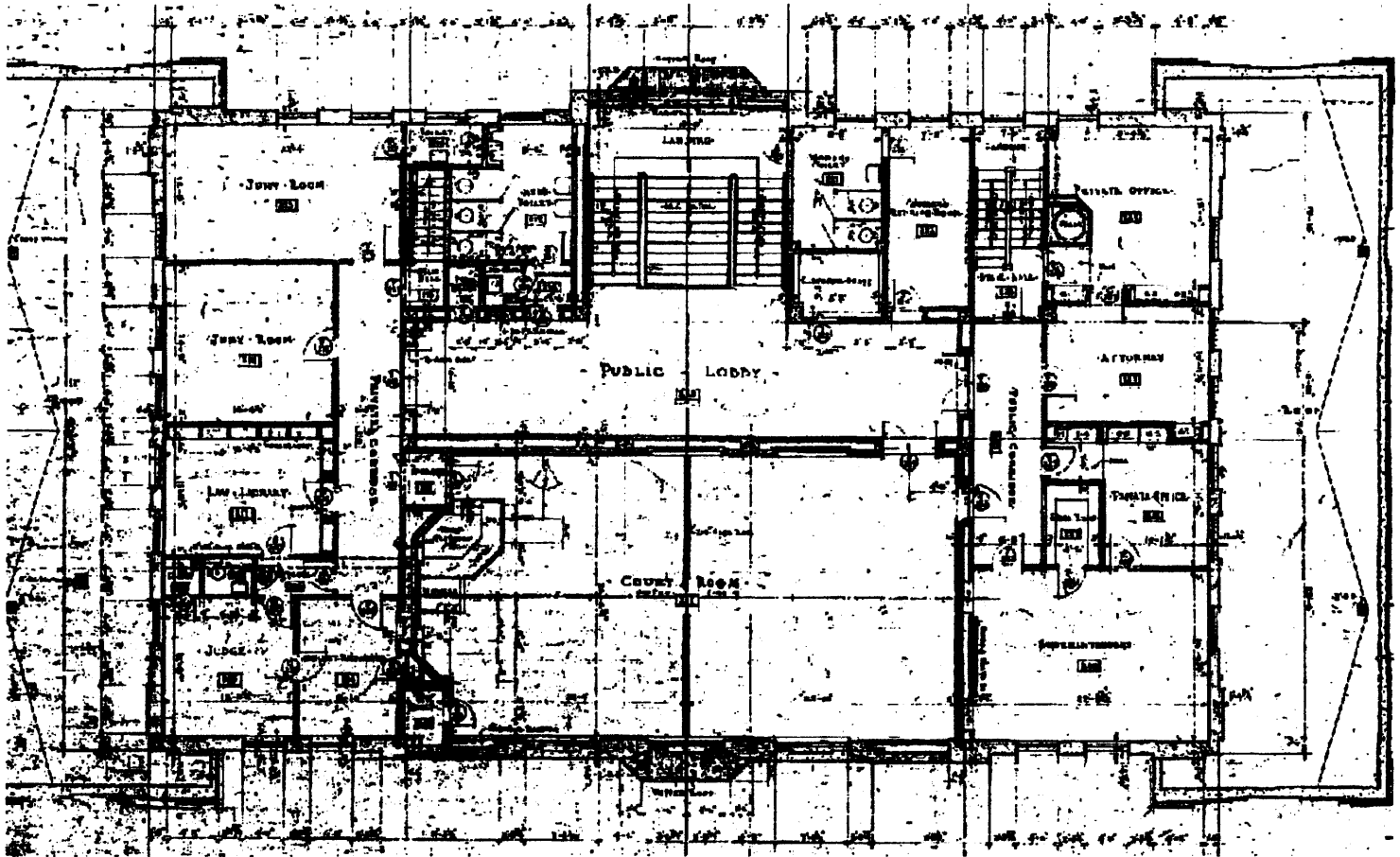
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Second Floor Plan (partial) 1933



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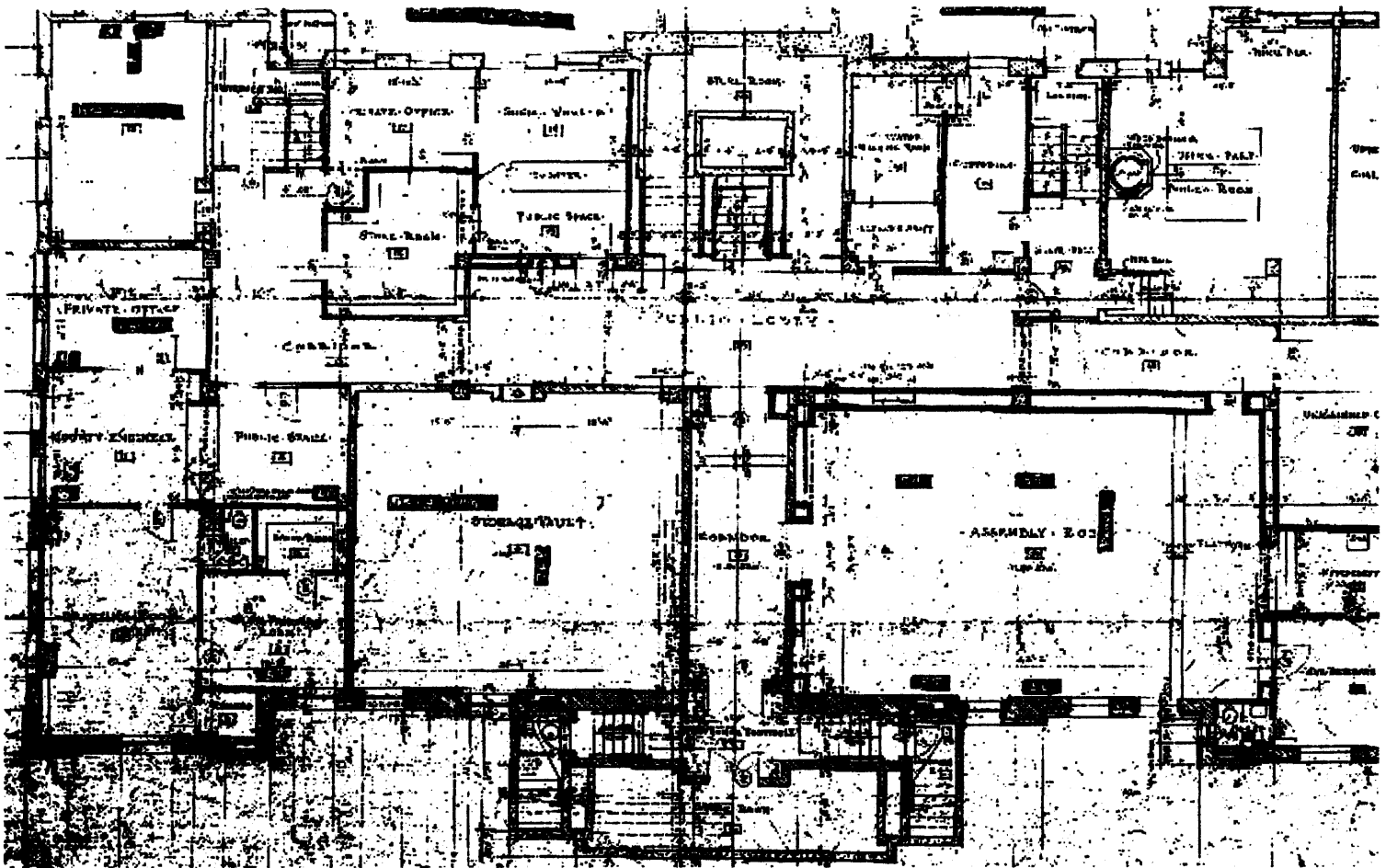
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Cass County Court House, Basement Floor Plan (partial), 1933



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Summary of contributing and non-contributing resources:

All historic resources associated with the courthouse were evaluated according to rules set forth in *National Register Bulletin 16A, How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* (1991). The evaluation was made according to procedures further specified in Section F.v. "Individually Eligible Properties," p. 47 of the PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa MPD. A summary follows.

- 2 Contributing Buildings: courthouse, garage
- 1 Non-contributing Structure: communications tower
- 1 Contributing Site: courthouse square
- 1 Contributing Object: flagpole

Summary of alterations:

- Installation of elevator, pre-1978
- New metal windows, 1979-1980
- Minor remodeling of various offices and rest rooms, late 1980s and 1990s
- Remodeling of west end of basement for sheriff's department; construction of correctional facility wing, 1982-1986 with major work in 1984
- Reglazing of central corridor walls, 1987
- Install east sidewalk ramp on south side, ca. 1995
- Replace section of facing brick above center windows on front façade, 1999
- Courtroom remodeling, 2000
- Re-roofing, 2000
- Patch concrete landing for front entrance steps, 2001

The changes made to the Cass County Court House are consistent with the registration requirements set forth under Section F.iv.c of the "PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa" MPD, pp. F45-F48. The most significant change the courthouse was the construction of the correctional facility wing. The MPD integrity requirements stipulate that additions such as that done for the Cass County Court House be made on non-principal façades and that choices for materials, design elements, scale and setback be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Buildings. The ca. 1984 correctional facility wing meets all of these criteria. Its location on the west façade of the courthouse, its low-profile, and screening make its impact on the front of the building minimal. Use of matching brick and limestone further reduce its potential impact.

The introduction of new windows is also consistent with the registration requirements. All of the openings have retained their original size with replacement sash incorporating metal transoms where reduced size sash have been installed. Closure of sash in the building's most important openings – the five courtroom windows – is regrettable. However, it was done in a manner that retained the appearance of the openings from the building exterior, including the decorative metal

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grills. This will make the reversal of the window closure at a future date possible.

The reglazing of the interior plaster walls was an important restoration measure in the building that has enhanced its historic interior. Care was taken to match the original color and appearance of the glazes used when the building was constructed. Similar care was taken with the replacement of a section of deteriorated brick at the front of the building. This section of brick was located above the main entrance. A careful match of the original brick color and finish allowed this masonry repair to be done without significant impact on the building's integrity.

The alterations of the courtroom completed in 2000 included repainting some of the glazed wall surfaces, modification of original light fixtures, and closure of windows with grained plaster surfaces. These were all linked to the decision to block the window openings in order to reduce drafts and provide greater security in the courtroom. These changes are all reversible at a later date when and if the windows are reopened and new sash installed. Window replacement will allow the removal of the grained plaster surfaces and the reintroduction of natural light. The changes in the light fixtures that were made to brighten the room will be able to be reversed as well. Though the window closure and related changes represent a serious loss integrity in the courtroom they are not sufficient to make the building maintain sufficient integrity for National Register listing.

Two other changes, the replacement of the roof and the installation of new sidewalk ramps, had no impact on the building's integrity.

8. Statement of Significance

Architect/Builder: (continued)

Dana Larson Roubal and Associates (for 1984 correctional facility wing)

Introduction:

The Cass County Court House is significant at both the state and local levels under Criteria A and C as one of ten county courthouses built in Iowa during the New Deal Era as part of the federal Public Works Administration and its predecessor agencies. Its construction represented a significant public investment of federal and local dollars by voters during a time when the economy was pressed by the effects of the Great Depression. Designed by Dougher, Rich & Woodburn of Des Moines, an important Iowa architectural firm responsible for the design of numerous PWA funded public buildings, it is a well-preserved example of the PWA Moderne style of public building architecture developed during the 1930s and early 1940s. Its design blends Art Deco and Moderne style elements with the utilitarian advantages of modern office building construction.

In addition to local significance, the Cass County Court House is significant at the state level. It

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was the first of the PWA funded courthouses approved and first erected in the state. In later years it served as an example for other counties of what could be accomplished with a PWA grant. Its design was copied for several buildings and it was featured in the major national publication dealing with the PWA. Nomination of the Cass County Court House is consistent with the registration requirements set forth in Section F of the "PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa" MPD.

Historical Background:

i. New Deal Era and the Public Works Administration:

In June 1933 near the end of Franklin Roosevelt's first one hundred days in office, Congress passed the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) creating two important federal initiatives designed to combat the Depression. The National Recovery Administration (NRA) was established to set up code agreements with private industries that would encourage greater employment and at the same time, regulate wages and affirm union organizing. The other new agency was intended to serve an emergency role hence the name, Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works. A short time later, President Franklin Roosevelt appointed General Hugh Johnson to head the NRA. During the next two years it would have a fractious history until the Supreme Court struck it down in May 1935.

Roosevelt's second initiative on behalf of industrial workers was intended to serve as an emergency program that would soon outlive its useful life.⁴ He appointed his good friend Harry Hopkins to head the newly established Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and Civil Works Administration (CWA). Responsibilities for the new Public Works Administration (PWA) were assigned to Harold Ickes, Roosevelt's fiscally conservative Secretary of the Interior. The following year the CWA efforts were also transferred to Ickes. Under their direction a series of federal undertakings were given form and substance. Management structures were created, distribution systems organized, administrative practices reorganized, and funding set in motion. By June 1934, Ickes had overseen expenditure of \$3.3 billion to 13,266 federal projects and 2,407 non-federal projects. The popular federal program would see a series of successive appropriations continue for nearly a decade until the PWA was dismantled in 1943. It is this aspect of the NIRA that comprises the balance of this discussion.

It is not surprising that the first public works projects to be funded through the FERA were for federal agencies. The Federal Employment Stabilization Board created in 1931 was responsible for establishing a six-year program of federal construction projects. However, under President Hoover's administration that was as far as the planning had gone. Now, with federal funding in place, many of these construction initiatives were ready to move forward. As a result, Washington,

⁴Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Roosevelt: The Coming of the New Deal* (Boston, 1959), p. 104 as quoted in Lisa B. Reitzes, "Moderately Modern: Interpreting the Architecture of the Public Works Administration, Volume II," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Delaware, May 1989, p. 370.

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D.C. was among the first cities to benefit from the demand for both skilled and unskilled workers created by these federal programs.

The other part of the NIRA was intended to stimulate non-federal projects where the national government would serve as a partner with states, local communities, schools, and other non-governmental groups. For these projects to get off the ground, considerable planning would have to take place first. Soon after FERA was established, each state was asked to establish an advisory board with three members. Their purpose would be to stimulate applications for the non-federal funds, forward reports to Washington, and handle requests for funds once they were received. These boards were criticized and by February 1934 were discontinued.⁵

State level offices staffed by federal employees soon replaced the state boards. These offices were headed by "state engineers" and despite their titles, their responsibility was to the federal government. In a major effort at decentralization, legal, engineering, and financing experts were transferred from Washington to the State Engineer offices. Over time, there were problems with these offices as well. Their titles lead to confusion as local officials sought to learn how to apply for federal assistance and were unclear as to whether the "State Engineer" was a promoter or administrator.

Despite these problems, Congressional appropriations continued annually, each year accompanied by mandated changes in the operation of the PWA program. Among the most important were provisions in the Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 that allowed the federal share of PWA projects to be increased from 30 percent to 45 percent. Another provision allowed the grants to cover the cost of architects and engineers, acquisition of necessary land, legal fees, and administrative costs. By including these costs, more localities were able to participate and the quality of projects was enhanced. An executive order issued by President Roosevelt added the requirement that prevailing wage rates be observed on PWA projects.

When the 1936 appropriation bill came up the following year, Congress expressed its continuing concern for the large numbers of unemployed Americans by enacting new measures in the PWA designed to accelerate the expenditure of PWA funds. Historian Lisa Reitzes summarized the conflict:

...it was widely agreed that, for the PWA to have a visible effect on unemployment and poverty, it needed to move quickly on labor-intensive projects; but Ickes insisted that to produce permanent useful public works whose execution would be economical and free from scandal, the PWA had to move slowly and apply strict standards for inclusion in the program...many in the government believed that the PWA needed to dictate what and where projects were undertaken; however, to enlist local support and ensure the "usefulness" of public works projects, many felt that distribution of PWA

⁵Jack F. Isakoff, "The Public Works Administration," *University of Illinois Bulletin*, Volume XXXVI, (November 18, 1938), p. 36.

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funds and designation of construction priorities needed to be guided by local decisions.⁶

In the end, Congress prevailed seeking to increase the ranks of the employed by speeding up spending on PWA projects. Setting an aggressive timetable for completion of projects did this.

The following year, Congressional sentiment shifted again. Funding under the PWA Extension Act of 1937 was drastically cut and July 1, 1939 set as the date for completion of all projects. The PWA's administrative staff was cut as it moved towards "liquidation" with state offices among the first to be shut down. Although seven regional offices, each with three or more states, had been in place since early in the life of the PWA, they had not had major responsibilities for project oversight.

This changed in the fall of 1937 as the state PWA offices closed. Thereafter, all grant applications, approvals, bidding and contracting, monitoring of wage scales, correspondence, payments, and auditing would flow through the regional offices. Though final authority remained in Washington, the day-to-day management of the PWA shifted to the regional offices. Iowa was one of eight states included in Region No. 4 headquartered in Omaha. Other states in Region No. 4 included Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Missouri. The other regional offices were headquartered in New York, Atlanta, Chicago, Fort Worth, San Francisco, and Portland.

By June 1938 with liquidation measures well underway, Congress reversed itself again. Measures to shut down the PWA were temporarily halted and a new appropriation of nearly \$1 billion was authorized. To keep the money flowing as quickly as possible, the appropriation law specified that new projects must be completed by July 1940.

In early 1939 a series of government publications appeared describing the story of the PWA. Some were designed to respond to criticism of the PWA and others were published to document for posterity the success of this experiment in public works construction. *The Story of PWA* came out in the spring of 1939, the lengthy *Public Buildings: A Survey of Architecture of Projects Constructed by Federal and other Governmental Bodies between the Years 1933 and 1939 with the Assistance of the Public Works Administration* came out later that year, and *America Builds the Record of PWA* came out before year's end.

The PWA officially ended in July 1939 as the focus of the Administration began to shift toward readying for war. President Roosevelt's reorganization plan consolidated the efforts of a number of the "alphabet agencies" under the umbrella of the Federal Works Agency (FWA). It absorbed not only the PWA but also the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Supervising Architect's Office in the Treasury Department (responsible for post office construction), and the U.S. Housing Authority. John M. Carmody was selected to head the new agency. The regional offices continued

⁶Lisa B. Reitzes, "Moderately Modern: Interpreting the Architecture of the Public Works Administration, Volume II," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Delaware, May 1989, p.372-373.

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to operate until 1943 with Iowa projects still in the pipeline managed through the Omaha office through 1941.

ii. *The PWA at Work in Iowa: County Courthouse Building (1934-1941):*

Establishment of the Public Works Administration in June 1933 prompted formation of a network of 48 state PWA offices. There was no precedent to guide the federal-state-local partnership resulting in considerable time spent during the first months in simply setting up the state offices. Communities were not prepared to respond quickly to a call for PWA projects and as a result, the federal government turned to two other programs to speed federal money into the pipeline – the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the short-lived Civil Works Administration (CWA).

Meanwhile it became clear that antiquated municipal and county laws governing public building and the poor credit ratings of many cities and counties in the wake of bond failures would further prohibit a prompt set of applications. The PWA responded by sending financing and legal experts to states to assist in drafting new state enabling legislation and arranging for federal loan guarantees. Although no history of Iowa's State PWA Office has been written, it is likely that similar problems and responses were experienced there. The acting state director of Iowa's PWA Office by the time the first county courthouse was being planned in Cass County was P.F. Hopkins.⁷ Based on the correspondence record from that office, it appears that he continued in that capacity throughout the office's life.

The process of selecting PWA projects would be the same in Iowa as in other states. Initially applicants would be able to apply for grants amounting to up to 30 percent of the project's costs. Funding could be used for labor and materials but not for project management, architectural and engineering fees, and land acquisition. There would be five "yardsticks" by which local projects would be measured:

1. The social desirability of the project and its relation to coordinated planning.
2. The economic desirability; that is its relation to unemployment and the revival of industry.
3. The soundness of the project from engineering and technical standpoints.
4. The financial ability of the applicant to complete the work and "reasonably secure" any loans by the United States.
5. The legal collectibility of the securities to be purchased or the enforceability of any lease entered into.⁸

In the case of county courthouses, the application would need to be submitted by the county board of supervisors with the actual applications usually prepared by the county auditor. In some Iowa

⁷P.F. Hopkins' familial relationship, if any, to PWA Administrator Harry Hopkins is unknown.

⁸*America Builds. The Record of PWA. Public Works Administration.* Prepared in the Division of Information by the United States, Public Works Administration. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939.

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counties, courthouses had been under discussion for years. In the case of Jones County, space for county offices and a courtroom was maintained in rented quarters for more than six decades prior to the completion of the new Jones County Court House in 1937. In Bremer County, the county offices and courtroom were housed in seven buildings including the 1857 courthouse, three banks, and above a hardware store. In the case of three counties, multiple referenda were held to consider building a new courthouse. One unique example involved the Cass County Court House in Atlantic. After a fire destroyed the old courthouse in 1932, a referendum vote was scheduled two months later. Faced with grim economic conditions voters turned down the referendum by a substantial margin. By the time the second vote was held, a citizens group had prompted the board of supervisors to apply for a PWA grant to underwrite a portion of the costs. After the second referendum was held year later, local officials were certain that the availability of a PWA grant had contributed to its passage. In several cases in Iowa when courthouse referenda votes were held in conjunction with a general election they failed. Passage appears to have been more likely when scheduled as part of a special election.

It was necessary for a PWA applicant to provide considerable information about their intended project. The only surviving application for a county courthouse in Iowa is believed to be the application prepared for the Jones County Court House in Anamosa in 1935. It is likely that it was typical of other applications filed. It contained the following:

- a general description of the project
- a statement regarding the status of drawings and specifications
- a breakdown of labor expenses by category of worker, amount, and percentage of grant allotment
- a breakdown of expenses for superintendence, architects, and engineers
- a breakdown of expense for land, materials, equipment, and contingent expenses
- a list of skilled laborers by specific trade and number to be employed
- estimated average worker yearly wage
- estimated total number of man-hours
- estimated daily average number of employees each month for term of the project
- a statement regarding source of other funds and statutory authority to undertake project
- a copy of the application resolution by the board of supervisors
- supplemental information regarding outstanding bonds, borrowing capacity, county population, and assessed valuation⁹

To answer these questions, an applicant-county would need to have preliminary cost estimates in hand. It would be impossible to determine the overall cost figure or any of the breakdowns required in the application without first having a general building plan in hand. To do this it appears that

⁹Application for Grant, Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, PWA Form No. 175 for Court House for Jones County," dated July 5, 1935, on file in Auditor's Office, Jones County Court House, Anamosa, Iowa.

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several architectural firms in Iowa were prepared to work for little or no fee during this first phase. In courthouses where Keffer & Jones of Des Moines were involved, the firm signed a contract stipulating that no fee would be charged until the PWA grant was approved and the bonds sold. Their services were limited to preliminary sketches until that time.¹⁰

The willingness of an architectural firm to work with a county in such a manner allowed two things. First, it enabled the county to prepare an application and respond in an educated manner to the questions posed by federal reviewers. Second, it gave the board of supervisors a building concept and design to promote during the referendum process. If the grants were awarded and the county's voters approved, the architect who had supported the local efforts was likely to secure the design services contract.

Once a PWA application was approved at the state, regional, and national levels, the board of supervisors moved to the next step – the referendum campaign. In virtually every county in the Iowa, these campaigns looked the same. A citizens committee, either formal or informal, undertook a public information campaign to persuade voters of the merits of building a courthouse with the help of a PWA grant. Presentations were given by members of the committee or the board of supervisors to civic organizations. Using the front pages of the local newspapers, articles appeared regularly touting the merit of grants that would underwrite 45 percent of the cost. Voters were encouraged to think themselves fortunate to be able to get more courthouse than their tax dollars would normally buy.

An example of such a campaign was seen on the front pages of the *Indianola Record* in 1936 and 1937. During the summer of 1936 the Warren County Federated Women's Clubs had the courthouse as part of their quarterly meeting. Following the meeting the *Indianola Record* carried an extensive article with the opinions of various members, both pro and con, cited. The newspaper carried similar articles when the Indianola Chamber of Commerce considered it on its several months later. The opinions of those who favored the new courthouse were best summarized in the comments of one Warren County woman when she said that "she had always been taught to take a piece of pie when it was passed to her. She was heartily in favor of constructing a new courthouse now when the county can get a \$145,000 building for \$80,000."¹¹ The referendum vote was held in conjunction with the general election in 1936 and failed. Two years later at a special election following a continuing campaign by promoters, the measure passed.

Other pro-courthouse campaign messages stressed the need for a new courthouse to keep records safe. In Cass County, a referendum information pamphlet made the case for approval by pointing out that in Douglas County, Nebraska the county had spent nearly \$300,000 to recreate records lost or damaged in a fire. When Jones County began to make a case for its courthouse in 1935 it

¹⁰Agreement between Architects and Owners, for Court House for Audubon County," dated July 29, 1938, on file in Auditor's Office, Audubon County Court House, Audubon, Iowa.

¹¹"Women's Clubs Talk Building a Courthouse," *Indianola Record*, July, 1936.

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contacted Cass County's auditor who happily shared a copy of the information pamphlet.¹²

A third reason frequently given for erecting a courthouse in the midst of a national economic depression related to the cost of bonds. Architect Karl Keffer combined all of these arguments when he spoke to the Audubon Board of Supervisors in August 1938. He said that the "primary reason Audubon County should have a new courthouse is because county records are not safe in case of fire in the present building. The secondary reason is that it would be to the county's financial advantage not only to secure the government grant but to take advantage of present low interest rates county bonds carry."¹³ Keffer's assessment of bond rates proved prophetic when the county was able to secure a favorable rate of just 1¾- percent later that year. This rate was less than half that paid four years earlier in Cass County.

Soon, the success of one PWA-funded courthouse encouraged other counties to undertake the application process. By the time Warren County voters were asked to consider approving a referendum the second time, the *Indianola Tribune* was able to feature photographs of three completed buildings – two were completed with PWA grants in Jones and Cass counties while a third, much smaller building, was erected before the PWA was available in Ringgold County.¹⁴

The first county to successfully complete the application, referendum, and courthouse construction process was Cass County in southwest Iowa in 1934. Both Governor Clyde Herring and Lieutenant Governor N. C. Kraschel were on hand for the cornerstone ceremony in March 1934 when 1,200 Atlantic school children turned out to greet them. Groundbreaking ceremonies, cornerstone laying events, courtroom dedications, and courthouse openings were celebrated with parades, keynote speakers, and historical pageants. In most communities completion of the courthouses was viewed as an opportunity to pass the torch from one generation to another and the county's old settlers were given special honors. In all but the last several courthouse completions community boosters used these events to look to better times ahead.

A chronological list of PWA-Era courthouses completed between 1934 and 1941 appears below. All received federal assistance except the Floyd County Court House, which was denied funding when the federal appropriation available for the state ran out.

¹²"Suggest for the New Court House for Cass County," prepared by the Board of Supervisors of Cass County, Iowa for November 8, 1932 referendum, on file in Auditor's Office, Jones County Court House, Anamosa, Iowa.

¹³"PWA Grant for Court House is Asked by Board," *The Advocate-Republican*, August 4, 1938.

¹⁴"County Board Reserves Right to Reject Any and All Architectural Plans for Courthouse," *Indianola Tribune*, August 3, 1938.

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Figure 2: Chronological List of PWA-Era Courthouses, 1934-1941

County/City Federal Project #	Year Completed	Architect	General Contractor	Original Cost ¹⁵
Cass Co., Atlantic Federal Public Works Project No. 1410	1934	Dougher, Rich & Woodburn, Des Moines, Iowa	C.C. Larsen Co., Council Bluffs, Iowa	\$130,000
Bremer Co., Waverly P.W.A. Docket IA 1338-R	1937	Mortimer Cleveland, Waterloo, Iowa	Drape Construction Co., Tripoli, Iowa	\$135,000
Jones Co., Anamosa P.W.A. Docket IA 1068-R	1937	Dougher, Rich & Woodburn, Des Moines, Iowa	C.C. Larsen & Sons Co., Council Bluffs, Iowa	\$200,000
Humboldt Co., Dakota City P.W.A. Docket IA 1351-DS	1939	Dougher, Rich & Woodburn, Des Moines, Iowa	Holtze Construction Co., Sioux City, Iowa	\$185,000
Warren Co., Indianola P.W.A. Docket IA 1290-F	1939	Keffer & Jones, Des Moines, Iowa	F.B. Dickinson & Co., Des Moines, Iowa	\$145,000
Audubon Co., Audubon P.W.A. Docket IA 1586-F	1939	Keffer & Jones, Des Moines, Iowa	J.C. Mayer, Clarion, Iowa	\$133,000
Buchanan Co., Independence P.W.A. Docket IA 1447-F	1940	Dougher, Rich & Woodburn, Des Moines, Iowa	C.C. Larsen & Sons Co., Council Bluffs, Iowa	\$254,000
Des Moines Co., Burlington P.W.A. Docket IA 1529-F	1940	Keffer & Jones, Des Moines, Iowa	Paul Steenberg Construction Co., St. Paul, Minnesota	\$280,000
Allamakee Co., Waukon Federal project # unknown	1940	Charles Altfillisch, Decorah, Iowa	Rye & Henkel, Mason City, Iowa	\$202,000
Floyd Co., Charles City Not funded with PWA assistance	1941	Hansen & Waggoner, Mason City, Iowa	James Thompson & Sons, Ames, Iowa	\$265,000

iii. Building the Cass County Court House:

Atlantic was established as the county seat of Cass County in 1869 after voters moved it from the town of Lewis. County offices were located in leased space until a new courthouse was completed in 1872 on land donated by the Atlantic Town Company. A decade later this building was replaced by a new, larger building on the courthouse square.

Over the next 60 years population in Cass County grew from 5,464 in 1870 to a peak of 21,274 in 1900. By 1930 population had dropped to 19,422, a pattern of decline that would be encouraged by the Great Depression during the subsequent decade. With the local farm economy in serious difficulty and hundreds of Cass County residents unemployed, a public tragedy struck on March 15, 1932. Fire engulfed the upper half of the fifty-year old courthouse at the north end of the business district destroying the courtroom, second floor offices, and venerable clock tower. Most

¹⁵Original cost figures include all expenses for completion of the courthouse including site acquisition if applicable, architectural fees, excavation, general contract, subcontracts, furnishings and equipment, and landscaping. Cost figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.

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of the county records were saved despite the conflagration.

Two months later, the board of supervisors retained the Des Moines architectural firm of Dougher, Rich and Woodburn to obtain preliminary plans and cost estimates for a new building. The following September the question was put before the voters to approve issuance of \$85,000 in bonds to be used in conjunction with the fire insurance settlement of \$46,500 to erect a new courthouse. On November 8, 1932 the courthouse referendum failed on a vote of 4,393 to 3,684. The courthouse issue was set aside for the next six months as the economic conditions worsened and the nation became consumed with emergency efforts to stabilize financial institutions. Measures taken on January 24, 1933 through the State Bank Stabilization Act and two months later with the National Bank Holiday complicated planning for the courthouse when \$20,000 of the County's insurance settlement became tied up in closed banks.

Federal initiatives of a different sort offered a solution to the courthouse dilemma. Among the most important efforts enacted in the wake of Franklin Roosevelt's election was a series of programs designed to put Americans to work through federal and local public works initiatives. These programs would eventually include the Public Works Administration, the Works Progress Administration, and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). All became active in Cass County by decade's end. On June 22, 1933 a citizens committee in Cass County met with the board of supervisors and recommended that they apply for a federal grant and loan totaling \$130,000. The board agreed and an application was eventually prepared to secure 30 percent of the construction cost in the form of a grant. A special election was held on September 26, 1933 and voters overwhelmingly approved the issuance of \$65,000 in bonds. Newspaper accounts credited the approval to the availability of the government grant.¹⁶ Bonds were sold in November with an interest rate of 4¾ percent, slightly below pre-Depression Era rates of 5 percent.

Work by Dougher, Rich and Woodburn resumed after the election and by the end of November plans for the courthouse, designated as "Federal Public Works Project No. 1410," were finalized. This was to be the firm's first of four federally funded courthouse projects in Iowa during the 1930s. Competition for the courthouse contracts was brisk. On December 1, 1933 the general construction contract was awarded to the C.C. Larsen Company of Council Bluffs for \$98,297. Contracts were won by H.F. Enebach of Harlan, Iowa for the plumbing and heating work and by H.C. Metcalf of Anamosa, Iowa for electrical work.

Construction commenced a short time later with the foundation ready for laying the cornerstone by March. The event was a sign of optimism amidst the lingering economic depression. Both Governor Clyde Herring and Lieutenant Governor N. C. Kraschel were on hand for the cornerstone ceremony. The local newspaper described the ceremony as "colorful" with elected officials, business leaders, and farmers throughout the county on hand. More than 1,200 Atlantic school children formed a "living wall" through which the governor passed.¹⁷

¹⁶"Beautiful New Structure is Most Complete," *Atlantic News-Telegraph*, undated, 1934.

¹⁷"Finest Christmas Gift in History of Cass County," *Atlantic News-Telegraph*, December 21, 1934.

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Throughout the course of construction, the federal government required that workers be paid minimum wages based on the prevailing wages for various trades. At the national level this measure had been established to stabilize wage rates and make sure that public works contracts did not see workers suffer in a competitive environment. For the Cass County Court House project, 24 different trades were represented in the workforce. The highest paid workers were structural ironworkers. Their rates were followed by bricklayers, plumbers, steam fitters, sheetmetal workers, asbestos workers, plasters, and terrazzo workers. Making slightly less were carpenters, electricians, glaziers, painters, roofers, cement finishers, and hoist operators. The poorest paid workers were truck drivers, teamsters, and helpers for various trades.¹⁸

As construction continued on the courthouse, supervisors were kept busy reviewing equipment plans and bids for the jail, offices, and courtroom. More than 100 separate firms provided construction services, equipment, or supplies to the courthouse project. The scale of the project was further revealed by statistics provided by the resident engineer inspector for the project. Edwin Holbrook reported that 116 carloads of material 3 cars of reinforced steel, 10 cars of cement, 20 cars of sand, and 13 cars of gravel. A total of 152 windows had been installed along with 19 clock outlets and 24 lavatories, but only 68 electrical receptacles. Three carloads of wood doors were shipped to fill 160 metal door frames. When completed the building had 600 linear feet of ornamental plaster, 1,900 cubic feet of cut limestone, and one car of ornamental iron installed. By the end of the project a total of 45,061 man-hours had been tallied by workers.¹⁹

The Cass County Court House was completed and dedicated on December 21, 1934. It was praised as "a temple of convenience and beauty" and having provided the county's taxpayers with "great big value for every dollar spent."²⁰

The Cass County Court House obtained significance at the statewide level in the years following its completion. It was the first county courthouse funded and erected using a PWA grant, and its referendum campaign served also as prototype for others that followed. In one instance a newspaper article promoting the referendum campaign in Warren County used the Cass County building as an example of what could be built in Indianola. In another case, the auditor in Jones County communicated with his counterpart in Cass County to secure suggestions for organizing the Jones County referendum effort. Later, sections of the campaign literature appeared verbatim in a promotional article about the referendum that appeared in a Buchanan County newspaper. The Cass County Court House's design was copied in these promotional efforts as well as two other counties, Humboldt and Buchanan. Statewide significance is further suggested for the Cass County Court House by its inclusion as the only Iowa courthouse in the 1939 survey of PWA projects written by C.W. Short and R. Stanley-Brown and published by the federal government.

¹⁸"Schedule of Minimum Hourly Wage Rates, Court House Building, Audubon, Iowa," November 10, 1938.

¹⁹"Finest Christmas Gift in History of Cass County," *Atlantic News-Telegraph*, December 21, 1934.

²⁰*Ibid.*; "Beautiful New Structure is Most Complete," *Atlantic News-Telegraph*, undated, 1934.

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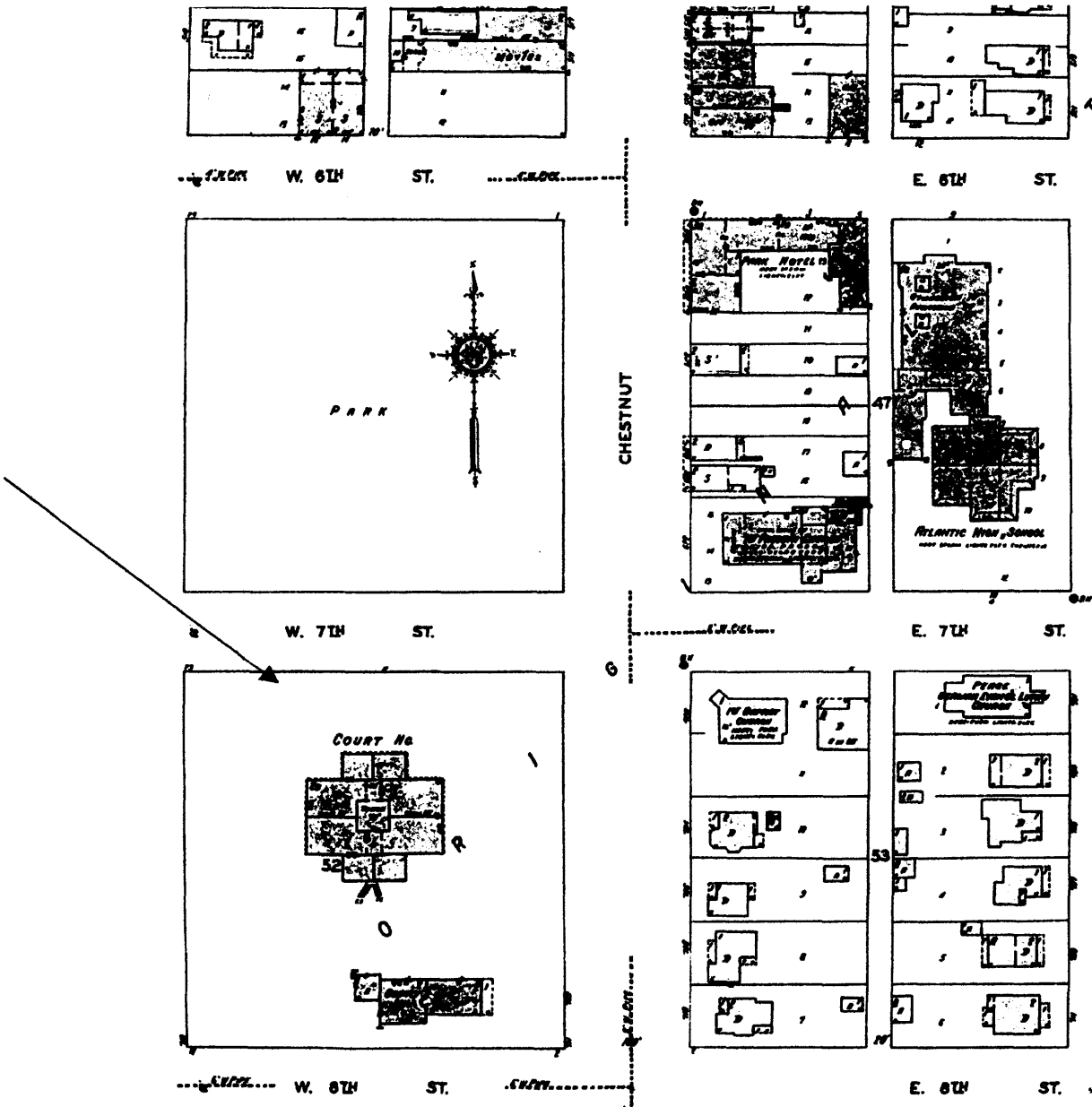
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Sanborn maps appear below and on the following page showing the courthouse site before and after construction of the new building.

Cass County Court House, 1927²¹

N ↑



²¹ Insurance Maps of Atlantic, Iowa. (New York: The Sanborn and Perris Map Company) 1931, p.3.

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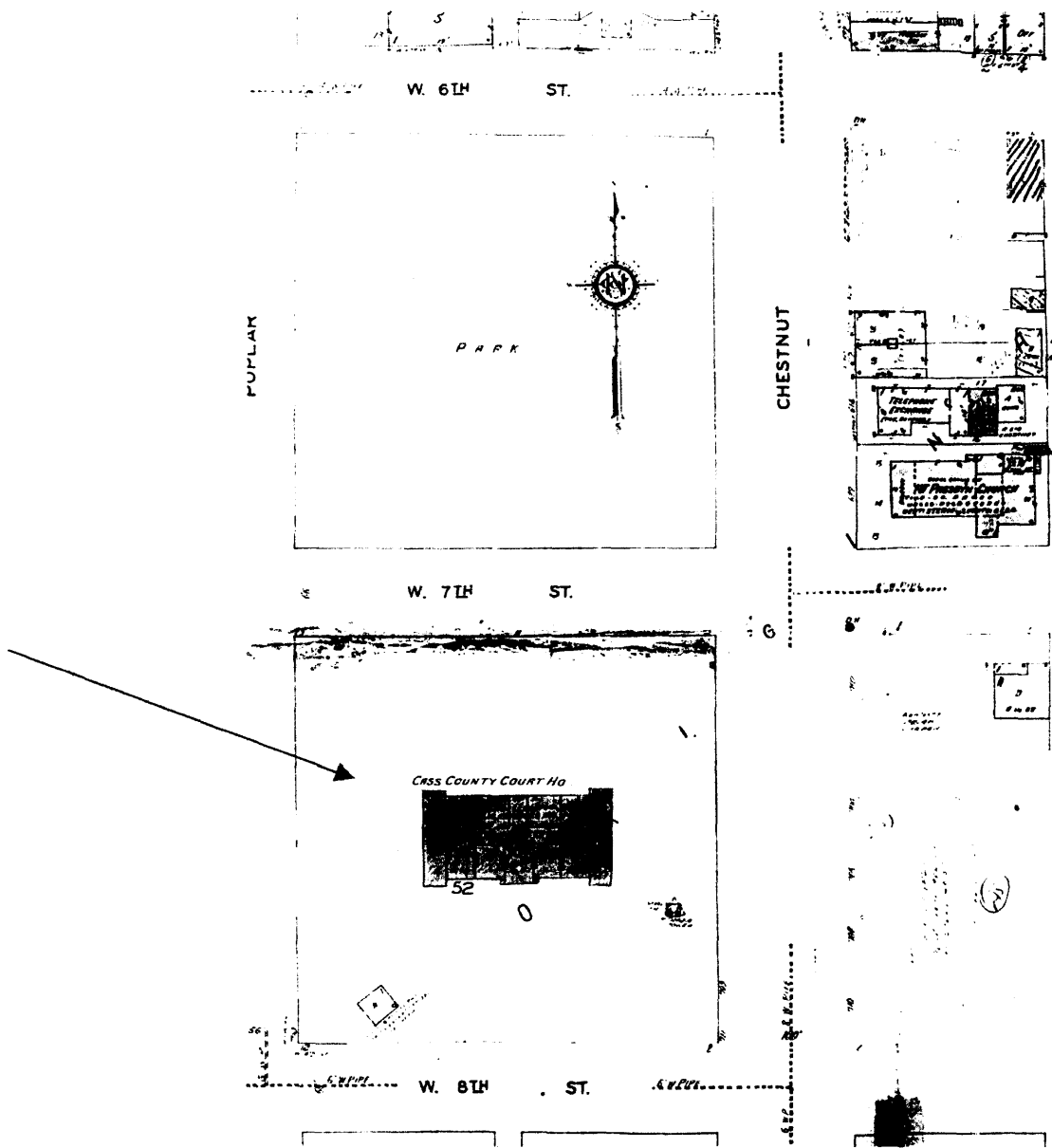
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Cass County Court House, 1957²²

N ↑



²²Insurance Maps of Atlantic, Iowa. (New York: The Sanborn and Perris Map Company) 1931 updated to 1957, p.3.

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iv. Architectural significance:

The Cass County Court House was designed by the architectural firm of Dougher, Rich and Woodburn with offices in Des Moines, approximately 75 miles east of Atlantic. James A. Dougher (1894-1976), Herbert E. Rich (? – ca. 1949), and Chester C. Woodburn (1893-1960) formed their partnership in 1923. Both Dougher and Rich had worked for the Des Moines firm of Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson. Woodburn worked as a structural engineer for Keffer and Jones, also in Des Moines. Dougher's strength apparently lay in administration while Rich's aptitude was for design and Woodburn's interest was in engineering and the business rather than professional side of architecture according to historian Wesley Shank.²³

During the 26 years that the firm practiced, the firm developed a substantial reputation in the state eventually receiving commissions for many schools, churches, and hospitals. The firm designed the Temple B'nai Jeshurun, St. Lukes Parish House, and Plymouth Congregational Church, all in Des Moines during the 1920s as well as the Presbyterian Church in Fairfield, the Methodist Church in Indianola, and the Methodist Church in Macedonia. Among their Iowa school projects were buildings in Boone, Hampton, Marshalltown, Muscatine, Marengo, Washington, Macedonia, Mt. Ayr, Dawson, Avoca, Creston, Hamburg, Keosauqua, Woodbine, Coon Rapids, Stratford, Sac City, Pomeroy, Shipley, and Altoona.²⁴ Several years before completing the Cass County Court House in Atlantic they designed another Art Deco Style building in Atlantic, the Whitney Hotel.

The firm developed a solid reputation for their work on county courthouses in the state as well. Commissions included the Cass County Court House (1933-1934) in Atlantic, the Jones County Court House (1936-1937) in Anamosa, the Humboldt County Court House (1938-1939) in Dakota City, and the Buchanan County Court House (1939) in Independence. These four New Deal Era courthouses designed by the firm share a number of design attributes including basic form, floor plan, and materials. Each building has a symmetrical façade with a central section (two to four levels) flanked by lower height wings at each end. In each case a central corridor extends the length of the building and county offices opening onto the corridor. Common materials include buff colored brick, Bedford limestone, multi-colored terrazzo floors, marble wainscoting, and acoustic tile. Though the courtroom designs are distinctly different, each originally used dark wood tones and Art Deco ornamentation.

The Cass County Court House is the first, and in some respects, the most elaborate of Dougher, Rich and Woodburn's PWA courthouses. Retention and restoration of the glazed plaster and decorative cornices in the corridors is rare in public buildings. The courthouse also retains many of the original light fixtures and furnishings.

²³Shank, Wesley I., *Iowa's Historic Architects: A Biographical Dictionary* (Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1999, pp. 52, 141, & 178.

²⁴"Architect's Description of Building," *Humboldt County Republican*, Humboldt, Iowa, March 10, 1939; and Barbara Beving Long, "Architects in Iowa Study," various working files prepared for the State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines, Iowa, September 1984.

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Completed Cass County Court House, 1934²⁵



Summary:

In summary, the Cass County Court House derives its significance as the first of ten county courthouses built in Iowa during the New Deal Era with funding assistance from the federal Public Works Administration. Its construction represented a significant public investment of federal and local tax dollars made at a time when this rural county was hard pressed by the Great Depression. Designed by Des Moines architects Dougher, Rich and Woodburn, it is a well-preserved example of the PWA Moderne Style of public building architecture that dominated the 1930s and early 1940s.

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²⁵Cass County Court House, "WPA Photograph Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa Library, Des Moines, Iowa.

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Verbal Boundary Description:

Block 52, Original Town Plat, City of Atlantic, Cass County, Iowa.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries comprise the original site for the Cass County Court House. This site includes all of Block 52, the original courthouse square located between W. 7th, Chestnut, W. 8th and Poplar streets.

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Photographs

#1-19, Bruce Meyer, photographer
Date taken: October 21, 2002

#20, Mariys Svendsen, photographer
Date taken: June 12, 2003

1. Front façade, center section, looking south
2. Front and east façades, looking southwest
3. Rear & east façades, looking northwest
4. Rear & west façades, looking northeast
5. Front & west façades, looking southeast
6. Upper windows, front façade, looking south
7. Front façade, entrance light, looking southwest
8. Front entrance vestibule, looking north
9. Central corridor, first floor, looking east
10. Central staircase, between first and second floors, looking southwest
11. Central corridor, second floor, looking east
12. Courtroom, towards front of room, looking east
13. Courtroom, niche behind judge's bench, looking east
14. Courtroom, judge's bench, looking southeast
15. Courtroom, jury box, looking northeast
16. Courtroom, ceiling cornice
17. Courtroom, ceiling light
18. Courtroom, towards rear of room, looking west
19. Courthouse site, front façade including flagpole, looking south
20. Garage, looking southwest