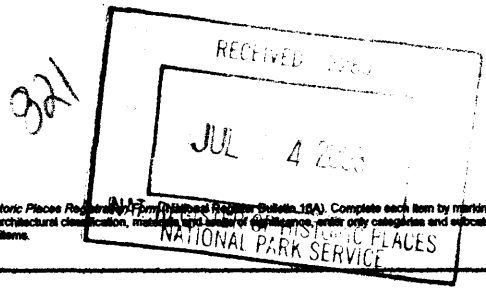


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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 uses, 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 Bremer County Court House

other names/site number PWA Docket IA 1338-R

2. Location

street & number 415 East Bremer Avenue N/A not for publication

city or town Waverly N/A vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Bremer code 017 zip code 50677

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).

Donell G. Soike 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~~ Signature of the Keeper
~~National Register~~

AUG 28 2003 Date of Action

AUG 28 2003

determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Bremer County Court House
Name of Property

Bremer County, IA
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5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)
 private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)
 building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
1		sites
	1	structures
2		objects
4	2	Total

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register**

PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa MPD

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

1937 - 1953

Significant Dates

1937

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Cleveland, Mortimer B.

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

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

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundanes 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 Marlys 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 Bremer County, c/o Kathy Thoms, Director of Finance & Management

street & number 415 E. Bremer Ave. telephone 319/352-0130

city or town Waverly state IA zip code 50677

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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Bremer County Court House
Name of Property

Bremer County, IA
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7. Description

Site: The Bremer County Court House (contributing) was built in 1936-1937 on the Court House Square (contributing) in Waverly, Iowa located between Northeast 1st Avenue on the north, East Bremer Avenue on the south, Northeast 4th Street on the west and Northeast 5th Street on the east. The courthouse site is located immediately east of the former Chicago and Great Western Railroad tracks, now a recreational trail corridor. State Road 3 extends along Bremer Avenue along the south side of the square. The Court House Square is a slightly elevated site with slopes extending down from building principally to the south and west. The courthouse is set back from the front sidewalk approximately 100 feet. Curved 5-foot wide sidewalks connect the front entrance to Bremer Avenue and a series of terraced steps and sloping sidewalks access Northeast 4th Street. The building's original flagpole (contributing) is placed approximately 50 feet south of the front entrance. Two Civil War cannons (non-extant) once present on the site were removed and melted down during the scrap metal drives of World War II. The previous county courthouse and related buildings stood on this site but no historic archeological investigation has been made to determine the presence of foundations or other building remains.

Mature deciduous and coniferous trees are scattered around the square. A replica model of the Statue of Liberty (contributing) is located south of the flagpole and front entrance. It has a copper finish and was installed in 1950 upon the 40th anniversary of the Boy Scouts of America. The 8 foot 4 inch statue is set on a concrete pedestal for a total height of approximately 13 feet. The commemorative placard on the statue reads "Crusade to Strengthen the Arm of Liberty." Identical statues are installed on the grounds of another PWA-Era courthouse, the Buchanan County Court House in Independence, and the Iowa Capitol in Des Moines. Other statues were erected in 1950-1951 throughout the United States and its territories as part of a patriotic campaign. Newspaper accounts elsewhere around the country describe the replicas as being constructed of stamped sheet copper in 47 different pieces and then brazed together.

An asphalt-paved parking lot extends along the rear of the building. A freestanding communications tower (non-contributing) used by the county sheriff's department and erected in the past 25 years is located at the northeast corner of the building. A two-bay garage (non-contributing) constructed sometime in the past 10 years is located northeast of the courthouse. It has a low-pitched gable roof and is constructed of brick matching that of the courthouse with vinyl siding in the gable ends.

Bremer Avenue serves as the principal east-west entrance route into Waverly and also as its main retail street. The Cedar River passes through Waverly on a generally north-south course about four blocks to the east of the courthouse. The former route of the Chicago and Great Western Railroad passes diagonally from northwest to southeast immediately west of the Court House Square. The former railroad right-of-way is now used as a recreational corridor for the Waverly Rail Trail. The main blocks of Waverly's commercial district are located west of the courthouse.

Exterior: The Bremer County Court House built in 1936-1937 is one of ten courthouses built in Iowa

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Bremer County Court House
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during the federal Public Works Administration (PWA) program's operation in the 1930s. It has a rectangular footprint measuring approximately 135 feet by 70 feet. The front of the courthouse faces south. The courthouse has a reinforced concrete structure with a brick and stone facing. The foundation is clad in Kasota Stone, a tan-colored limestone quarried near Mankato, Minnesota sometimes referred to as "Mankato Stone." The walls are faced in a tan-colored brick manufactured by the Mason City Brick and Tile Co. and are set in a light gray-colored mortar. Decorative cut stone is also Kasota Stone with the entrance surround constructed of polished black marble.

Front elevation: On the front or south elevation, the building's central section is seven bays wide with a height of 3½-stories or approximately 38 to 40 feet. Original 2½-story wings are located at the west and east ends of the building. A raised basement extends beneath the entire building with window wells positioned to either side of the entrance steps. The central section's bays are separated by brick pilasters that extend from the top of the stone waterable to the cornice. The window bays have slightly recessed stone panels above and below the windows in the five center bays and brick in the other window bays. The stonework in the center bay is more elaborate containing stepped, recessed stone sections with geometric design in the half-diamond along the upper edge. Simple cut-stone designs are also found in the blocks above the third floor windows in the two bays to either side of the entrance bay. The two-part stone cornice consists of a plain stone band surmounted by a fluted band above the half-diamond stone course. The cornice on the outer bays and secondary wings is of a simpler design and appears to be painted concrete rather than stone.

The entrance steps are constructed of concrete and are centered on the front elevation between solid cut-stone balustrades. The front entrance's original double doors, transom, and sidelights have been replaced by a new door, narrow sidelights, and a three-part transom. The polished black marble surround has receding stepped sections to either side of the door. Unlike other county courthouses built during the 1930s, the building name is confined to the upper lintel above the transom where "Bremer County" is incised in the polished stone. The letters were originally highlighted with aluminum leaf. A fallout shelter sign from the 1960s is posted on the right side of the entrance surround.

To either side of the front entrance steps are wide window wells designed to provide light to the basement level offices and assembly room. A simple balustrade composed of horizontal piping extends along the window wells.

All of the courthouse's windows are replacement sash. The new sash were installed in 1980-1981 and are fabricated of metal with a brown finish. Each unit is configured with an infill panel in the top of varying sizes and a pair of casement windows below. The three center bays on the second and third floor serving the courtroom have extended height windows, each with six fixed lights beneath a wide infill panel.

Side elevations: The east and west elevations are nearly identical except for differences due to

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Bremer County Court House
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elevation changes. The basement level is fully exposed on the west where the ground slopes downward. Four windows appear on both the first floor and basement levels of the west end; no windows appear on the basement level of the east end. The 3½-story sections contain four recessed window bays with projecting brick pilasters and cornice detailing matching that of the front façades of the secondary wings.

Rear elevation: The rear or north elevation is a less symmetrical, utilitarian version of the front façade. The 3½-story center section is divided into nine bays with brick used for both recessed and projecting wall sections. The plain cornice and coping detailing matches that of the balance of the side elevations. An added exterior entrance vestibule fashioned from metal and glass panels is centered on the rear entrance door. Window wells surrounded by wrought iron railings are located on each side of the entrance. Secondary entrances are located in the outer bays of the center section, each connecting to a secondary staircase on the interior. New windows in the rear elevation are of a similar design to others replaced in 1980-1981. Windows of varying sizes are located in each bay. Windows in the bays containing staircases are located at landing levels in order to provide optimum light.

The most significant alteration in the rear façade is the addition of a double-bay garage at the northeast corner. It has brick walls that match the courthouse brick in color and texture and a gable roof covered in asphalt shingles. The end gable is clad in vinyl siding. Construction date for the garage is unknown.

Interior Floor Plan: The Bremer 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 northeast and northwest corners of the building. An elevator shaft was not designated in the original plan but was added in 1975. The elevator is now incorporated into the center section of the formerly open stairwell. The stairs leading between floors are accessed through doors to either side of the elevator. The district courtroom is located on the second floor and the county jail was formerly located on the third floor. 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 (light and dark gray) with polished tan-colored stone (probably Kasota Stone) for the tall wainscoting set on a black marble baseboard. Smooth plaster finishes the walls above the wainscoting and on the ceiling. A decorative plaster cornice with an Art Deco style design consisting of half-diamonds and fans extends along the perimeter of the room beneath a simple boxed molding around the ceiling. The ceiling light is a suspended replacement fluorescent fixture. A single door with sidelights and

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transom has replaced the original pair of aluminum outer doors. The original paired inner doors are painted metal with plate glass and paired horizontal chrome bars set midway. The radiator is recessed along the east wall. The custom designed grate is fabricated of brushed aluminum and features an Art Deco floral pattern.

The rear vestibule opens into the building midway between the basement and first floor levels. A replacement rear entrance door matching the front door leads to a narrow terrazzo floored vestibule. The elevator located in the center of the stairwell has a rear entrance door that opens at the vestibule level. A short flight of stairs on the right (west) leads up to the first floor with a full flight leading to the basement on the left (east) side.

Public corridors: The first floor corridor has a terrazzo floor with three shades of gray forming a border and diamond pattern in the field. The walls have a tall polished Kasota Stone wainscoting set on a black marble baseboard matching that of the entrance vestibule. The half-diamond and fan patterned ornamental plaster frieze extends along the ceiling. Openings onto the corridor are a mix of original and new configurations. The north side of the corridor has original entrance openings, some with new doors and transoms, leading to offices and restrooms. Restrooms were modified to accommodate accessibility requirements during the most recent rehabilitation of the building. A glass-doored display cabinet is in the west end along this wall. Along the south wall, office entrance doors opening onto the central corridor have been replaced with new public counters and retractable metal service window closures. At the intersection of the entrance vestibule and public corridor the original ceiling light is in place. It is identical to that found in the Allamakee County Court House in Waukon constructed in 1939-41. It is a tall, six-sided pendant style fixture fabricated using a combination of bronze and aluminum framing and decorative elements with a white glass shade. The main decoration is a series of eagles along the upper edge.

The second floor corridor is finished in a similar manner as the first floor with terrazzo floors, polished stone wainscoting, and decorative plaster cornices. The openings into the judge's chambers and related offices in the west end, the original district courtroom, the law library, and two new courtrooms are a mix of original and new doors. A wall and door at the west end of the corridor now limits access to the offices and the northwest stairwell in this area through a secured hallway.

The third floor formerly served as the jail with dormitory space for jurors. This area was rehabilitated in the mid-1970s when the jail was removed. A short central corridor serves as an elevator lobby with access at each end to offices for the clerk of court and county attorney. The walls are plastered, ceilings lowered, and all new entrances and doors are replacements. The basement corridor also has a lowered ceiling height with recessed fluorescent lights, two-tone floor tile, and a mix of original and new openings and doors. Several of the offices along the south side of the corridor have new public counters and retractable metal service window closures.

County offices: As noted previously, many of the county offices were rehabilitated in 2000-2002 with the installation of new corridor service counters, the removal of various inner office walls, and

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the installation of carpeting and lowered acoustic tile ceilings. As a part of the remodeling, various offices were moved from their original locations in the courthouse. The current floor plan has the assessor, building and zoning department, and board of supervisors' offices and meeting room located on the basement level; the recorder, auditor, and county treasurer on the first floor along with centralized administrative support areas; various court related offices, three courtrooms, and the law library on the second floor; and the offices of the clerk and county attorney on the third floor.

Central staircase: The central staircase is located midway along the north wall of the central corridor opposite the front entrance. Unlike the other PWA-Era courthouses in Iowa, modifications of the staircase in the Bremer County Court House have changed its role as a visual focus of the building. As originally designed the staircase had a "modernistic" look provided by the stainless steel balustrade that encircled the open stairwell. Horizontal rails set 4 inches apart and mounted on vertical posts formed the balustrade. Following installation of the elevator and enclosure walls for purposes of fire separation, the staircase is visually separated from the central corridor. The right hand door on the first floor leads to the flight of stairs that ascends along the east wall to the landing between the first and second levels before continuing onto the second floor. On the west side, the door leads to a half-flight of stairs that connects to the entrance vestibule landing. The treads and risers are covered in gray terrazzo. On the upper levels, plastered walls and access doors enclose the central staircase.

Courtroom: The most important space aesthetically and functionally in a courthouse is usually the courtroom. The Bremer County Court House's district courtroom is located on the second floor facing the front of the building (south). It was modified in 2002 as part of a rehabilitation of the second floor that saw two additional courtrooms created and a secure access system created for purposes of escorting prisoners from the secondary stairs in the northwest corner of the building to the courtrooms. The original district courtroom measured approximately 65 feet by 25 feet with a two-story ceiling height extending into the third floor. In the 2002 rehabilitation, the size and shape of the courtroom was modified by the installation of a secure hallway along the south side of the room adjacent to the front windows. Openings in this wall are trimmed in the same manner as the south windows with matching wood veneer infill panels in the lower half of the openings and two fixed lights in the upper half to provide natural light for the courtroom. The rear third of the room is now a separate courtroom. New air conditioning and ventilation for the courtroom was made possible by the installation of ductwork within a soffit along the north wall.

All of the rehabilitation measures identified above were made while trying to retain the character of the courtroom. The front of the courtroom located at the west end of the room retains its original niche or recessed wall. It is lined with white oak veneer paneling, has a stepped lintel across the front, and fluted pilasters at the sides. The opening was originally centered on the front wall with doors leading to the judge's chambers and jury room to either side of the niche. The installation of the secure hallway shifted the symmetry of this arrangement by using the south opening as part of the hallway. The north entrance opening retains its fluted white oak trim boards and flush paneled door with a matching fluted center molding.

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Bremer County Court House
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The judge's bench, witness stand, and reporter's desk continue to be located at the west end of the room with the jury box in the original recessed opening on the right or north side. Spectator seating in the east half of the room consists of six rows of pew-style white oak benches placed theater style with a single aisle along the north side. A closed balustrade covered in oak veneer serves as the bar between the spectator area and counsel tables. Chrome plated metal swinging gates are set in from the sidewalls at each end of the bar. The room originally had eight rows of benches. When the room was reduced in size, the six remaining rows were shortened slightly at the middle in order to fit the modified single side-aisle arrangement.

The interior walls of the courtroom have a smooth finish plaster on the upper sections with white oak veneered wainscoting topped by a black painted chair rail. The same veneered finish is used for the jury box, judge's bench, and reporter's desk. The ceiling is covered with acoustic tile installed as apart of the 2002 remodeling replacing earlier acoustic tile. A plain, boxed cornice extends around three sides of the ceiling (two sides, original and one a replication). Three matching original light fixtures are suspended from the ceiling. Each has a horizontal structure suspended from the ceiling at three points. The fixtures have angled brass metal framing with white and gold colored glass containing eagles and stars. Each fixture originally had incandescent bulbs but to provide more light, each fixture has now been modified for fluorescent bulbs.

As noted above, the "niche" or recessed wall at the front of the courtroom behind the judge's bench has a simple Art Deco style design with a stepped cut for the upper molding or lintel. Matching white oak veneered panels form the jury box, judge's bench, witness stand, and reporter's desk. A common molding design is used along the top of all of these stationary parts. The jury box has its original swivel pedestal seating.

Walls for some of the offices in the west wing were rearranged in the 2002 remodeling with space provided for two judge's chambers, two jury rooms, two court reporters, and restrooms. They are accessed through the door located north of the judge's bench or through a separate, secure hallway at the west end of the central corridor. After the former sheriff's apartment in the east wing was abandoned in 1975 when the jail was moved out of the courthouse, the area was converted to office space, a third courtroom, and a jury deliberation room. The law library is located along the north side of the east corridor in space originally occupied by the county superintendent.

Floor plan: As originally conceived, the principal county offices for the Bremer 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 district courtroom, judge's chambers, law library, jury rooms, attorney's lounge, attorney's consultation room, and county superintendent's offices. The east end contained the sheriff's apartment, which included a living room, kitchen, bath, and two bedrooms, each outfitted with a fold-up closet bed or "Murphy bed." The third floor contained the dormitory rooms for women and men jurors, control room, quarters for female and

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juvenile prisoners, and the main cellblock of the jail. The basement contained an additional storage vault, a large assembly room, the county relief office, and space for the county engineer.

During the recent three-phase remodeling, the original allocation of space in the courthouse was altered to accommodate new departments and changing functions of county government. 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 (ADA rest rooms) or through alterations (elevator installation). 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. Floor plans published in the *Waverly Democrat* in April 1936 appear below and on the next page.

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Continuation Sheet

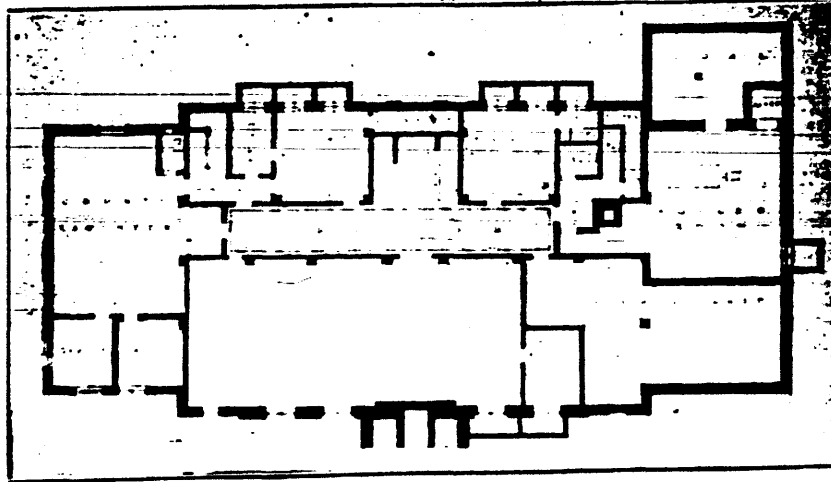
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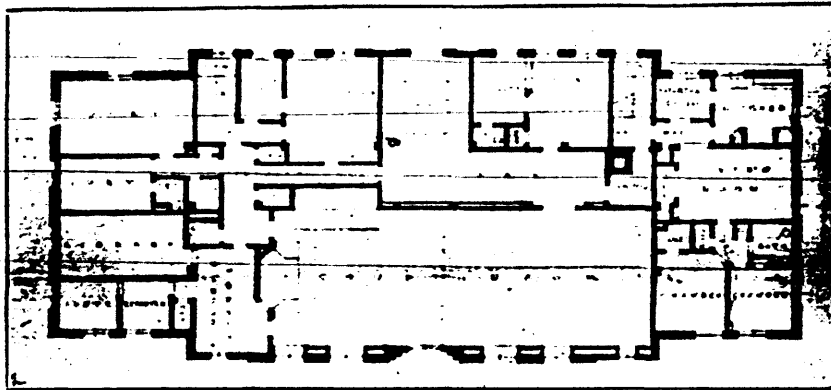
Bremer County Court House, basement and second floors, 1936¹



BASEMENT:—

At the left is the office of the county engineer, with an office and a vault. In the south central part of the basement is a room 24 by 60 feet, for public meetings. To the east of this room is a large irregularly shaped room for "transfer stor-

—Independent-Democrat Engraving
age," or for the safekeeping of records and other material used only occasionally. In the north end of the east wing, at the right, are the boiler room and the coal room. The county relief office is at the left of the main stairs on the north side of the building.



SECOND FLOOR:—

The "department of justice" occupies most of this floor. At the front is the courtroom, approximately 23 by 63 feet in size. To the left or west is an attorney's lounge and rooms for the court reporter, judge, and law library. In the northwest corner are two jury rooms, and to the

—Independent-Democrat Engraving
west of the main stairs is a consultation room for attorneys. East of the main stairs are two rooms for the use of the county superintendent of schools. The east wing is occupied by the sheriff's living quarters, composed of two bedrooms, living room, kitchen, and bath.

¹"Floor Plans for Bremer County's New Courthouse Building; Get Contract on Courthouse," *Waverly Democrat*, Waverly, Iowa, April 3, 1936. The 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.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

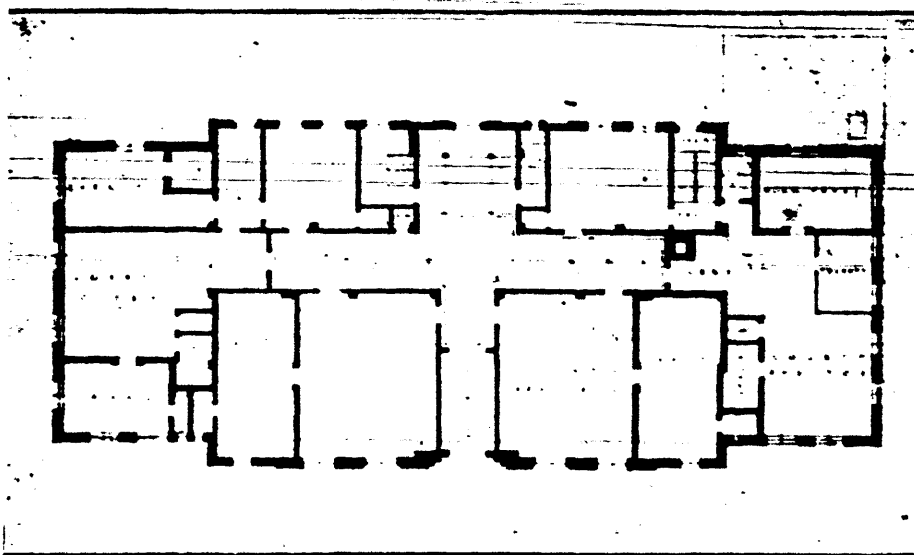
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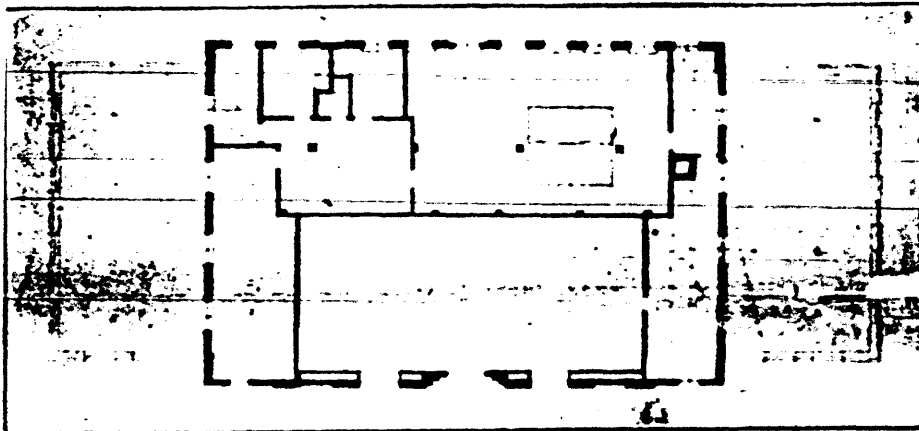
Bremer County Court House, first and third floors, 1936



FIRST FLOOR:—

The main entrance is in the central lower portion of the picture. Going around the main lobby, which is about 60 feet long and 2 feet wide, clockwise or to the left, we find these offices: (a) County Recorder, with vault; (b) County

—Independent-Democrat Engraving Clerk, with vault; (c) Sheriff, with private office; (d) Supervisors' office; (e) County Auditor, with work vault; (f) County Treasurer, with vault. Most of the offices have a floor space equal to 36 to 25 sq ft. One inch on the drawing is equal to about 24 feet.



THIRD FLOOR:—

This floor is constructed only in the central portion of the building. At the front or south is the upper part of the courtroom, which has a higher ceiling than other rooms on the second floor. To the left or west of this is the jury dormitory and in the northwest corner, the control

—Independent-Democrat Engraving room and cells for women and juveniles. The main jail is the large room at upper left center. To the right of the courtroom is a large transfer storage room. The engravings used here are from black-and-white pen-and-ink drawings prepared in the office of M. B. Cleveland, Waterloo, architect who prepared plans for the building.

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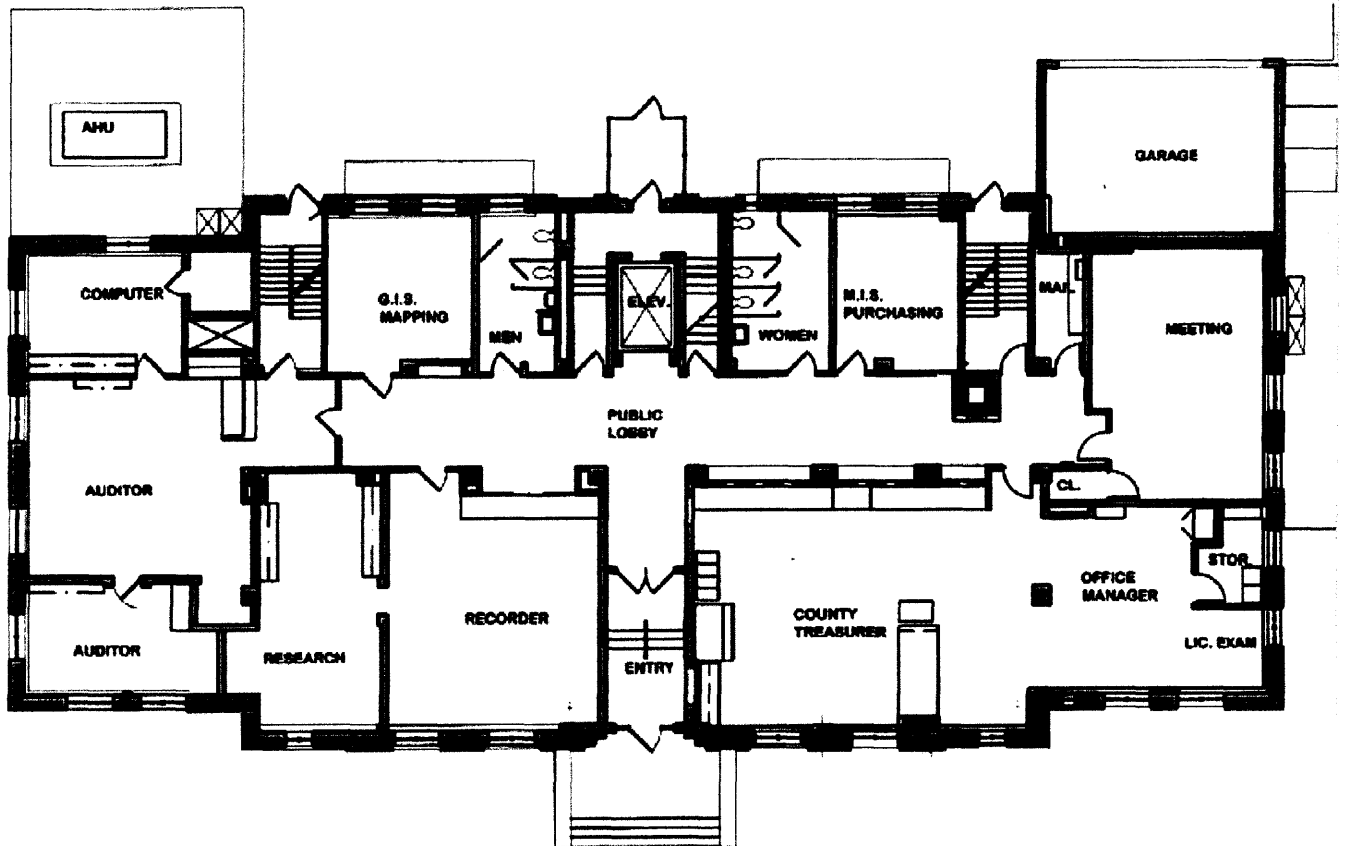
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Floor plans prepared in November 2002 following completion of the courthouse's remodeling under design guidance of InVision Architecture of Waterloo, Iowa appear below.²



Bremer County Court House, First Floor Plan, 2002



 **First Floor Plan**
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

²Floor Plans prepared by InVision Architecture for Bremer County Court House, November 7, 2002.

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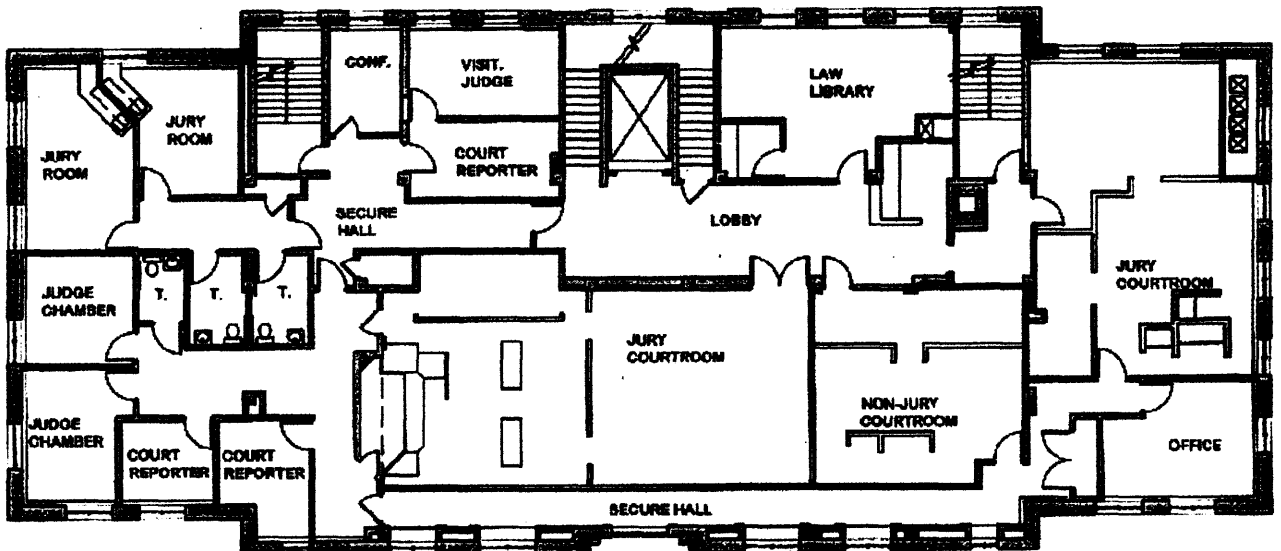
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Bremer County Court House, Second Floor Plan, 2002



Second Floor Plan

SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"

InVision.
ARCHITECTURE
900 Webster Building

Bremer County Courthouse
WAVERLY, IOWA

NOVEMBER 7, 2002

Waverly, Iowa 50701

319.233.0400

(Fax) 319.233.9772

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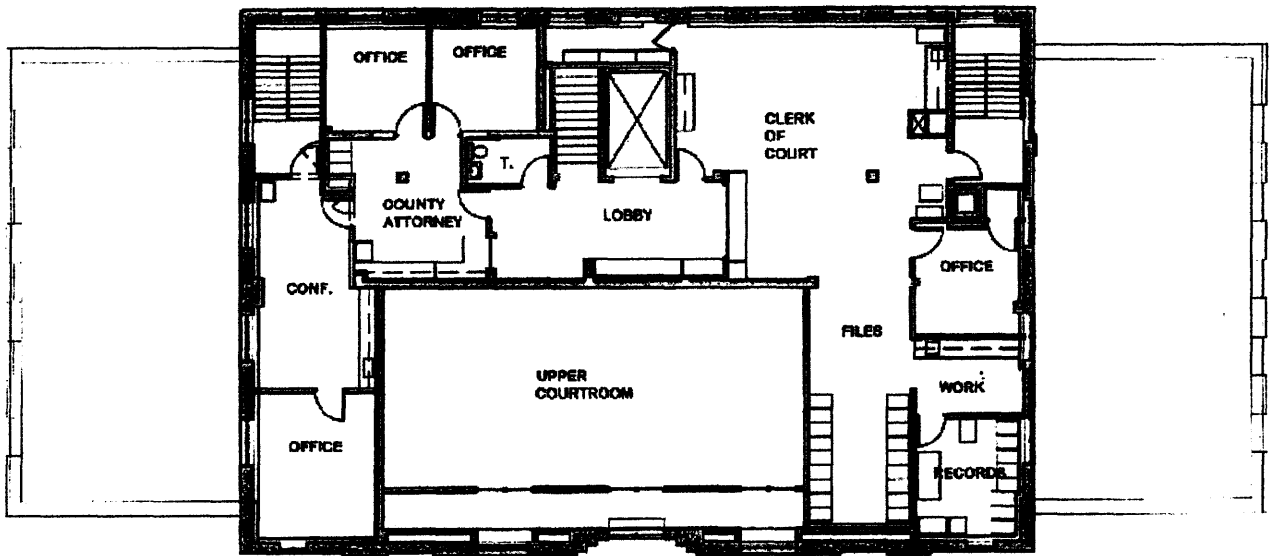
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Bremer County Court House, Third Floor Plan, 2002



Third Floor Plan
SCALE 1/16" = 1'-0"

InVision.
ARCHITECTURE
900 Waterloo Building

Bremer County Courthouse
WAVERLY, IOWA

NOVEMBER 7, 2002

Waterloo, Iowa 50791

319.233.8419

(fax) 319.233.9772

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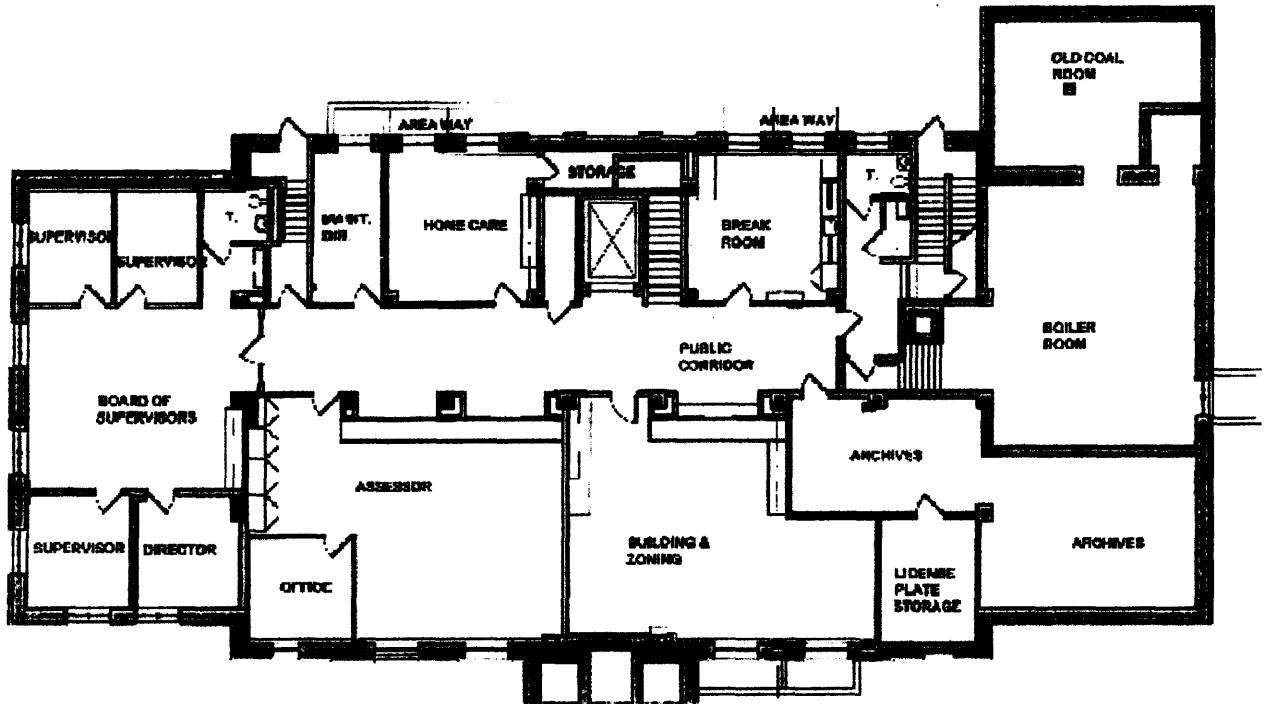
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Bremer County Court House, Basement Floor Plan, 2002



 Basement Plan
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

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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.

- 1 Contributing Building: courthouse
- 1 Non-contributing Building: garage
- 1 Non-contributing Structure: communications tower
- 1 Contributing Site: courthouse site
- 2 Contributing Objects: flagpole, scale model of Statue of Liberty

Summary of alterations:

- Sheriff's apartment abandoned and jail removed from courthouse, 1975
- Installation of elevator, 1976
- New metal windows, 1980-1981
- New radiators and general remodeling, 1984-1985
- Addition of rear entrance vestibule, date unknown.
- Addition of garage, date unknown
- Three-phase general rehabilitation of courthouse offices and public spaces, 2000-2002
- Courtroom remodeling, 2002

The changes made to the Bremer 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. Major exterior changes have included the introduction of new windows and doors in all openings. This change is consistent with the registration requirement that such changes be made without permanently reducing the opening size. In the case of the Bremer County Court House, all of the openings have retained their original size with replacement sash incorporating metal transoms where reduced size sash have been installed. Other exterior changes including the addition of a rear entrance vestibule and the construction of a storage garage, have been completed along the rear façade of the building. In the case of the entrance vestibule, its construction did not change the original opening and would be reversible at a future date. The storage garage was constructed of a matching brick and plantings screen its presence somewhat.

The most significant changes to the courthouse have been made on the interior, first following removal of the jail and sheriff's apartment from the third floor in 1975 and later during the phased rehabilitation completed in 2002. The changes on the third floor were typical of those made in other courthouses where vacated jail space was taken over by other county offices for general office, conference room, and storage space. Changes made during the phased rehabilitation included

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alterations to the district courtroom and involved the reconfiguring of the interior floor plan throughout the building to provide more efficient use of floor space for an expanding workforce and new functions. This rearrangement was made possible after the jail was removed from the third floor, and following earlier changes that saw space for the sheriff's apartment, jurors' dormitories, and county superintendent eliminated. In the 2000-2002 courthouse rehabilitation new quarters were established for the county assessor, planning and zoning office, computer operations, clerk of court, and county attorney. Expanded judicial functions were accommodated by the addition of two courtrooms and related offices for the recorder and jury deliberation rooms. All of these office changes were accomplished while leaving the primary public entrances and lobbies minimally altered.

Changes made in the district courtroom altered the building's most significant interior space. A careful attempt was made to retain the courtroom's original wainscoting, doors and wood trim, front niche, judge's bench, witness stand, reporter's desk, jury box, jury chairs, the bar separating the counsel area from the gallery, light fixtures, and pew/bench seating. A reduction in the size of the courtroom was done in a manner that would allow reopening all or a portion of the space at some future date. As a result, the courtroom changes were considered acceptable though regrettable.

8. Statement of Significance

Architect/Builder: (continued)

InVision Architecture, Waterloo, IA (for 2001-2002 courthouse rehabilitation)

Introduction:

The Bremer County Court House is significant 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 successor agencies. Its construction represented a significant public investment of federal and local dollars by voters in a sparsely populated rural county that was hard pressed by the effects of the Great Depression. It was designed by Mortimer Cleveland, an important northeast Iowa architect responsible for the design of hundreds of residences, public buildings, and commercial structures in Waterloo and surrounding communities. Its design is an 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. Nomination of the Bremer 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:

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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 or 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.³ 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, 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.

³Arthur 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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These boards were criticized and by February 1934 were discontinued.⁴

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 funds and designation of construction priorities needed to be guided by local decisions.⁵

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

⁴Jack F. Isakoff, "The Public Works Administration," *University of Illinois Bulletin*, Volume XXXVI, (November 18, 1938), p. 36.

⁵Lisa 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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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 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

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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.⁶ 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.⁷

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 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

⁶P.F. Hopkins' familial relationship, if any, to PWA Administrator Harry Hopkins is unknown.

⁷*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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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 valuation⁸

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 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.⁹

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

⁸Application 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.

⁹Agreement 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.

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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."¹⁰ 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 contacted Cass County's auditor who happily shared a copy of the information pamphlet.¹¹

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

¹⁰"Women's Clubs Talk Building a Courthouse," *Indianola Record*, July, 1936.

¹¹"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.

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rates county bonds carry."¹² 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.¹³

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.

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

County/City Federal Project #	Year Completed	Architect	General Contractor	Original Cost ¹⁴
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

¹²"PWA Grant for Court House is Asked by Board," *The Advocate-Republican*, August 4, 1938.

¹³"County Board Reserves Right to Reject Any and All Architectural Plans for Courthouse," *Indianola Tribune*, August 3, 1938.

¹⁴Original 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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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	1941	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 Bremer County Court House:

Waverly was established as the county seat of Bremer County in 1853 by commissioners appointed by the Iowa General Assembly. No challenges to this selection in the form of county seat battles were ever fought in subsequent years. Beginning in 1854, county offices were located in a small frame courthouse. This was replaced after three years by a substantial brick and stone courthouse that stood adjacent to the current building. A records storage building was added to the Court House Square in 1870.

Over the next 60 years population in Bremer County grew steadily from 12,528 in 1870 to 16,305 in 1900 and 17,046 in 1930. Population continued to grow in Bremer County through the next decade, following the trends of stable or slowly rising population in adjacent counties in Northeast Iowa.

Work towards construction of the present Bremer County Court House began in the fall of 1935 when the board of supervisors authorized submittal of a PWA grant application for \$60,650 to cover 45 percent of the construction costs for a new courthouse. With the PWA appropriation for 1934-35 obligated, the application was initially turned down. Once a new appropriation was approved by Congress for 1936, Bremer County's grant request was approved. A petition campaign was carried out and a referendum vote scheduled for March 10, 1936. County electors would be asked to authorize the sale of \$75,000 in bonds.

Over the intervening weeks, voters discussed the need for a new courthouse and the merits of the PWA grant. Courthouse advocates pointed out that county offices were located in seven leased or county-owned buildings with valuable records only minimally protected. Opponents pointed out that the PWA requirement that prevailing wage rates be used would increase the cost of labor for the project as much as \$10,000 or \$15,000. Supporters of the courthouse project countered that

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this increase in labor costs needed to be weighed against the outright gift of \$60,750 that the county would receive from the federal government for the project. One newspaper article claimed that at least \$50,000 of wages would go to Bremer County residents employed on the project.¹⁵ Most of the opponents of the project resided in the eastern part of the county. The suggestion that the county seat be moved to Tripoli and the new courthouse be built there also entered the referendum discussion. On March 10, 1936 after a lengthy campaign and with the strong support of the *Waverly Democrat*, the courthouse referendum carried with a 65.3 percent approval rate.

Mortimer B. Cleveland of Waterloo had completed preliminary work on the courthouse design prior to the submittal of an application. Once the referendum passed, Cleveland's work was finalized and plans approved by the board of supervisors. Bids were received on March 30, 1936. The extremely short bidding period gave an advantage to local contractors. As a result, the general construction contract was awarded to the Drape Construction Co. of Tripoli located in eastern Bremer County. Drape's low bid was \$92,097. Contracts were won by J.W. Darragh of Cedar Rapids, Iowa for the plumbing and heating work and by Goodrich & Gallagher for electrical work. Darragh's company had completed similar work at the North Dakota State Capitol and a number of other PWA assisted projects in Iowa.

Excavation commenced on the square in April immediately west of the old courthouse. Work proved more difficult due to unexpected sub-strata of limestone. As a result, the bedrock was blasted with dynamite at one stage in the excavation process. By late May, footings were poured and the foundation and columns soon followed. By early August newspaper photographs show brick and stone work completed on the exterior walls to the second floor. The following month both the second and third floor slabs were poured. Exterior masonry construction was completed in October and glazing was completed before winter allowing interior work to proceed uninterrupted.

Throughout the course of construction, the federal government required that workers be paid minimum wages based on the prevailing wages in the area 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 Bremer County Court House project, newspaper accounts indicated that all workers were hired through National Reemployment Service. The highest paid workers were structural ironworkers. Their rates exceeded those of most of the skilled workers who earned a minimum of 75¢ per hour. Among the skilled workers were bricklayers, plumbers, steam fitters, sheetmetal workers, asbestos workers, plasters, and terrazzo workers. Making about the same or slightly less were carpenters, electricians, glaziers, painters, roofers, cement finishers, and hoist operators. The poorest paid were unskilled workers employed as truck drivers, teamsters, and helpers for various trades who earned a minimum of 40¢ per hour.¹⁶

¹⁵"Labor From All Parts of County to Get \$50,000," *Waverly Democrat*, Waverly, Iowa, March 6, 1936.

¹⁶"Schedule of Minimum Hourly Wage Rates, Court House Building, Audubon, Iowa," November 10, 1938 and "Labor from All Parts of County to Get \$50,000," *Waverly Democrat*, Waverly, Iowa, March 6, 1936.

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By the spring of 1937 portions of the courthouse were sufficiently complete to allow the county staff to begin the task of moving into the new building. The task was completed in April and the dedication ceremonies scheduled for June 10, 1937. Featured speaker was Richard F. Mitchell, a native of Fort Dodge and chief justice of the Iowa Supreme Court. Between 1,200 and 1,500 people attended the afternoon program at which the courthouse was formally presented to the citizens of Bremer County.

Others in attendance at the dedication ceremony included P.F. Hopkins, state director of the PWA. During a brief presentation he noted that a total of 329 PWA projects valued at \$26,000,000 had been undertaken in Iowa by that time. The PWA contributed \$9,000,000 towards that cost. Hopkins stressed the fact that for every man given a job in constructing a PWA project another 2½ men were given work producing the materials for the project.¹⁷

Work continued on the Court House Square after the dedication ceremonies. Demolition of the old courthouse was accomplished for the nominal cost of \$495. In addition to removing the old courthouse, the crew of "relief workers" removed the old music pavilion and fountain on the square, graded the site, and landscaped the area.

The Sanborn map that appears on the following page shows the courthouse site before construction of the new building. The aerial photo shows the site in 1994 with the new building in place.

¹⁷"1200 Present for Courthouse Dedication," *Waverly Democrat*, Waverly, Iowa, June 11, 1937.

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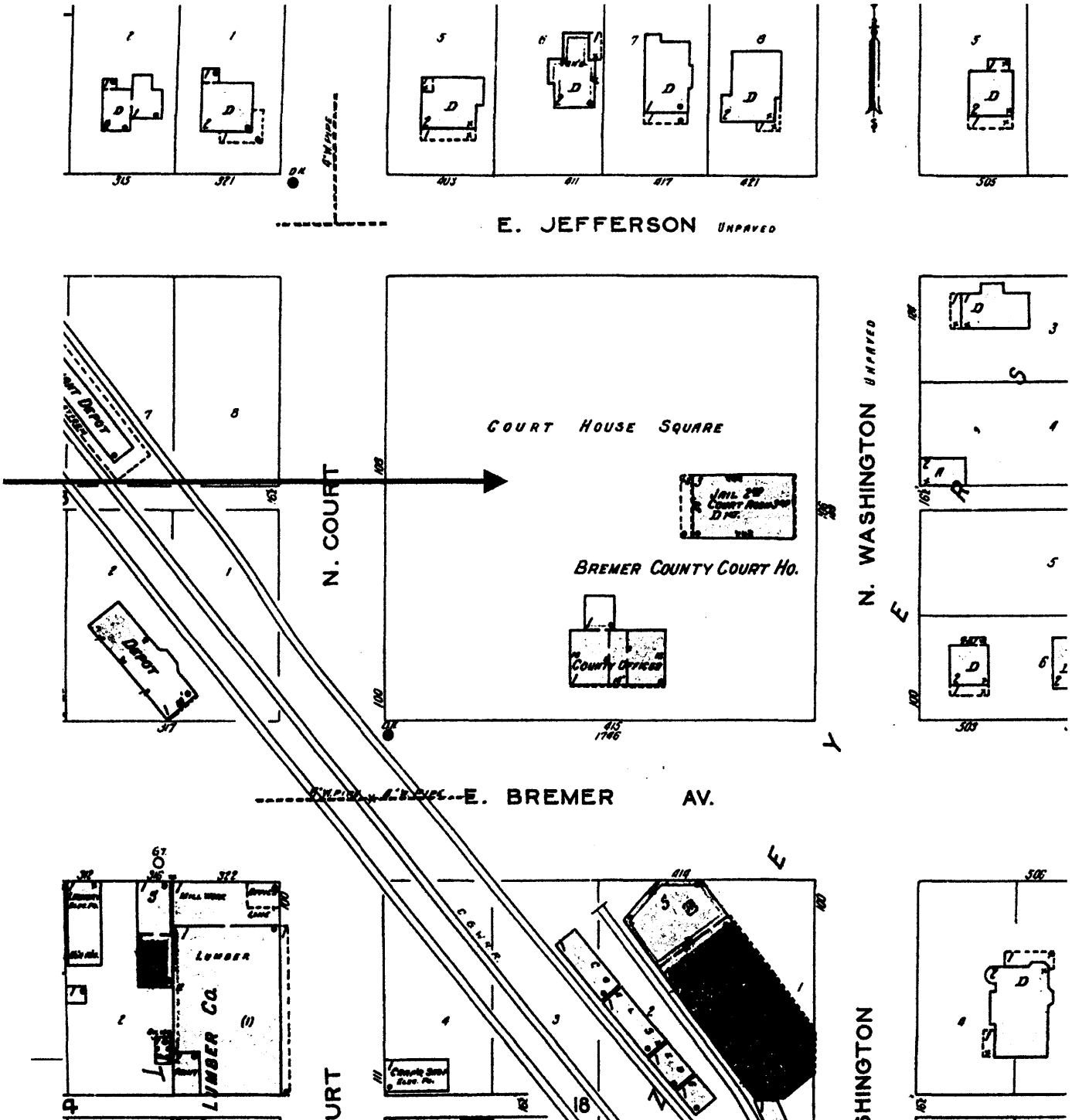
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Bremer County Court House, 1927¹⁸

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Bremer County Court House, 1994¹⁹

N ↑



¹⁹USGS Aerial Photo dated April 22, 1994 for Waverly, Iowa, USA; accessed 1/20/03 from:
<http://terraserver.homeadvisor.msn.com/image.aspx?T=1&S=10&X=2719&Y=23652&Z=15&W=1&P=Waverly%2c+iowa%2c+United+States&D=22+Apr+1994&O=4209221NW&Lon=-92.4638&Lat=42.7267>.

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iv. Architectural significance:

The Bremer County Court House was designed by Mortimer B. Cleveland (1882-1979), one of northeast Iowa's most important early 20th century architects. He returned to his hometown of Waterloo, Iowa to start his architectural practice after graduating from the University of Illinois in 1908. Here his work primarily included residential commissions in Waterloo's Highland District. Identified as one of Iowa's earliest Prairie School architects by architectural historian Wesley Shank, more than 40 of Cleveland's house designs have been identified in the Highland District.²⁰

In the years leading up to World War I, Cleveland began adding commercial and office buildings to his design work. Most of these early commissions were located in Waterloo and were for former residential building clients. During the 1930s he started designing telephone exchange buildings for Northwestern Bell throughout northeast and central Iowa. Though utilitarian buildings, Cleveland designed most in the Moderne Style with some containing Art Deco embellishments. A measure of their success is the fact that many survive with new uses and minimal alteration 50 to 60 years after their initial construction. Northwestern Bell commissions in Iowa were completed in Anamosa, Cedar Falls, Decorah, Dubuque, Elkader, Maquoketa, Marshalltown, Mason City, New Hampton, Oelwein, Vinton, Waterloo, and Waverly.²¹

As one of only a handful of professionally trained architects in northeast Iowa, commissions for public buildings including schools, hospitals, and churches began coming his way. He designed nearly every high school, junior high school, and elementary school building in Waterloo from ca. 1915 through World War II. During these years and continuing after the war he had commissions for schools in Charles City, Centerville, Bayard, and Independence. Hospital work included Allen Memorial Hospital in Waterloo, St. Anne's Hospital in Algona, Charles City Hospital, and Mitchell County Memorial Hospital in Osage. Church commissions were spread across northeast and north central Iowa with several works completed in Des Moines as well.

Mortimer Cleveland's design work was well known in Waverly at the time that he accepted the commission to design the Bremer County Court House. He had completed the designs for the Lutheran Mutual Aid Society home office building, the Wartburg College Administration Building, and residences for R. Eldon Laird and Carl Hagemann families.

Erected in 1936-1937 under Cleveland's supervision, the basic plan and form of the Bremer County Court House were typical of other Moderne Style courthouses built during the decade. Unlike the other nine PWA-Era courthouses that used Bedford limestone for trim, the primary stone trim specified by Cleveland for the Bremer County Court House was Kasota Stone, a cream colored limestone quarried near Mankato, Minnesota, about 100 miles north of Waverly. Other aspects of the building's appearance would make it difficult to differentiate from designs by other Iowa PWA architects. It has a rectilinear floor plan and a symmetrical façade with a central 3½-story section

²⁰Shank, pp. 42-43.

²¹Long, "Architects in Iowa Study."

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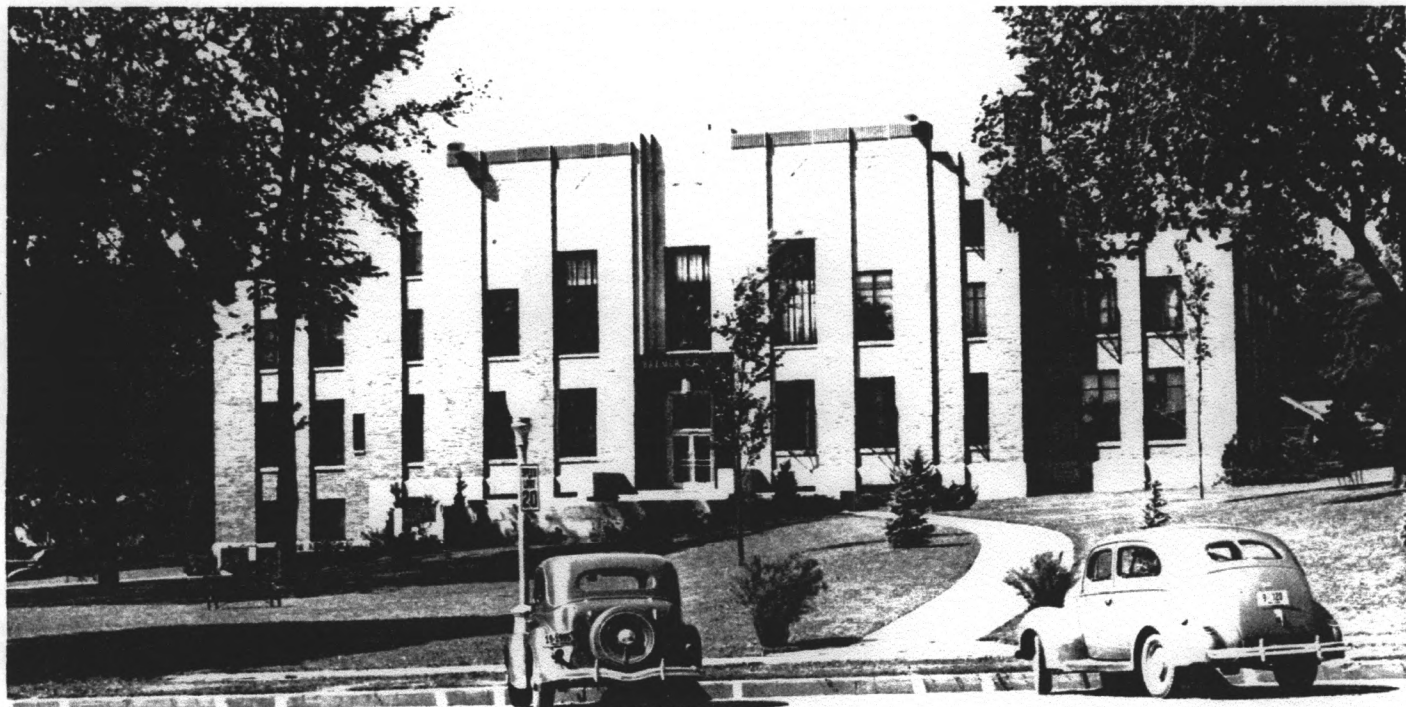
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flanked by 2½-story subsidiary wings at each end. Each floor has a central corridor extending the length of the building with county offices, meeting rooms, and courtroom space opening onto it. Interior finishes in common with other PWA-Era courthouses include multi-colored terrazzo floors, polished stone wainscoting, and Art Deco light fixtures.

The Bremer County Court House was the second PWA courthouse built in Iowa and the only courthouse designed by Mortimer Cleveland. Though modified by measures designed to continue its use as a modern office building, the courthouse retains its PWA Moderne design and the majority of its original finishes, fixtures, and furnishings.

Completed Bremer County Court House, ca. 1945²²



Summary:

In summary, the Bremer County Court House derives its significance as one 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.

²²Bremer County Court House," Courthouse Photograph Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa Library, Des Moines, Iowa.

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Designed by Waterloo architect Mortimer B. Cleveland, it is an important example of the PWA Moderne Style of public building architecture that dominated the 1930s and early 1940s.

Acknowledgement:

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"Cleveland Is Architect," June 10, 1937.

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"Seven Miles of Wire Used," June 10, 1937.

"Stainless Steel Rail," June 10, 1937.

"Trace History of New Bremer Courthouse," June 10, 1937.

"Varied Materials in New Structure," June 10, 1937.

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"Zahn in Charge of Decorating," June 10, 1937.

"1200 Present for Courthouse Dedication," June 11, 1937.

"Court House Offices Once in Two Buildings," January 26, 1989.

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description:

Court House Square, Original Town Plat, City of Waverly, Bremer County, Iowa.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries comprise the original site for the Bremer County Court House. This site includes all of the Court House Square located between 4th Street NE, 1st Avenue NE, 5th Street NE, and East Bremer Avenue.

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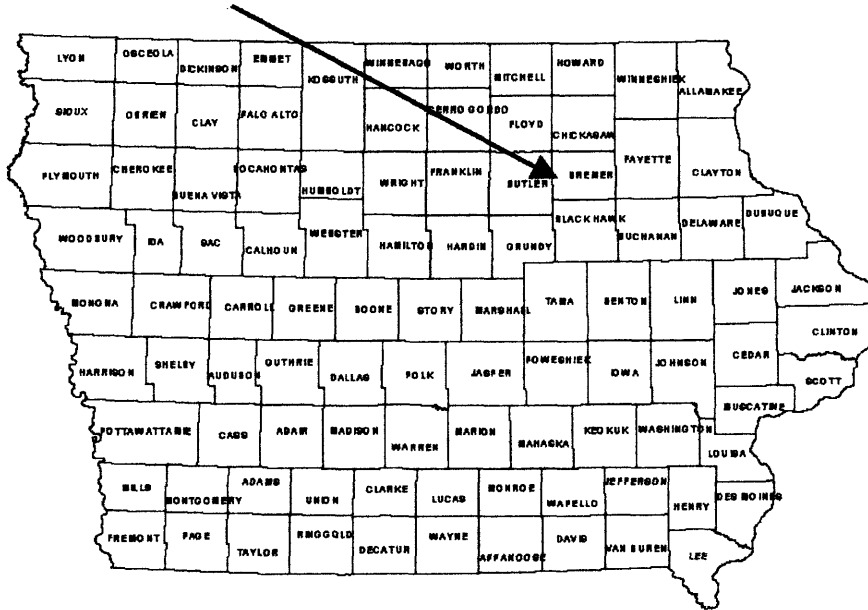
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Map: Bremer County, Iowa

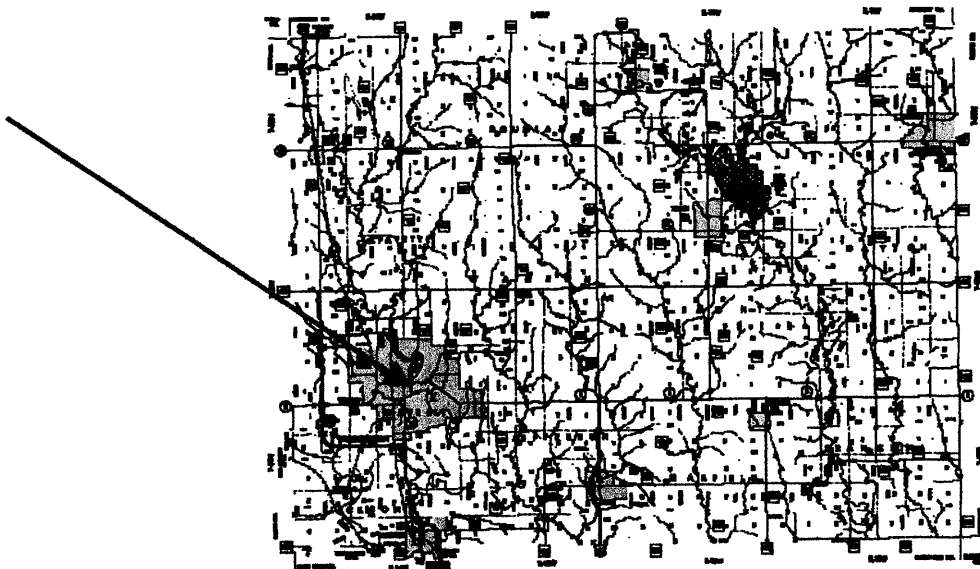


**BREMER AND IMMEDIATELY ADJ
BREMER COUNTY
IOWA**

Map of
Iowa Department
of Transportation
Cooperating
United States
Department of Transportation

LEGEND

- State Route
- County Road
- Local Road
- Water
- Settlement
- Unimproved Land



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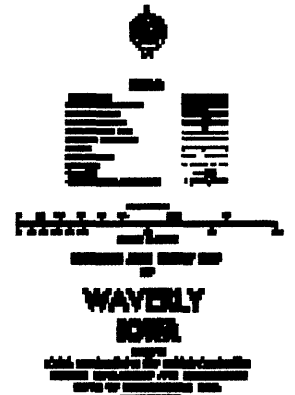
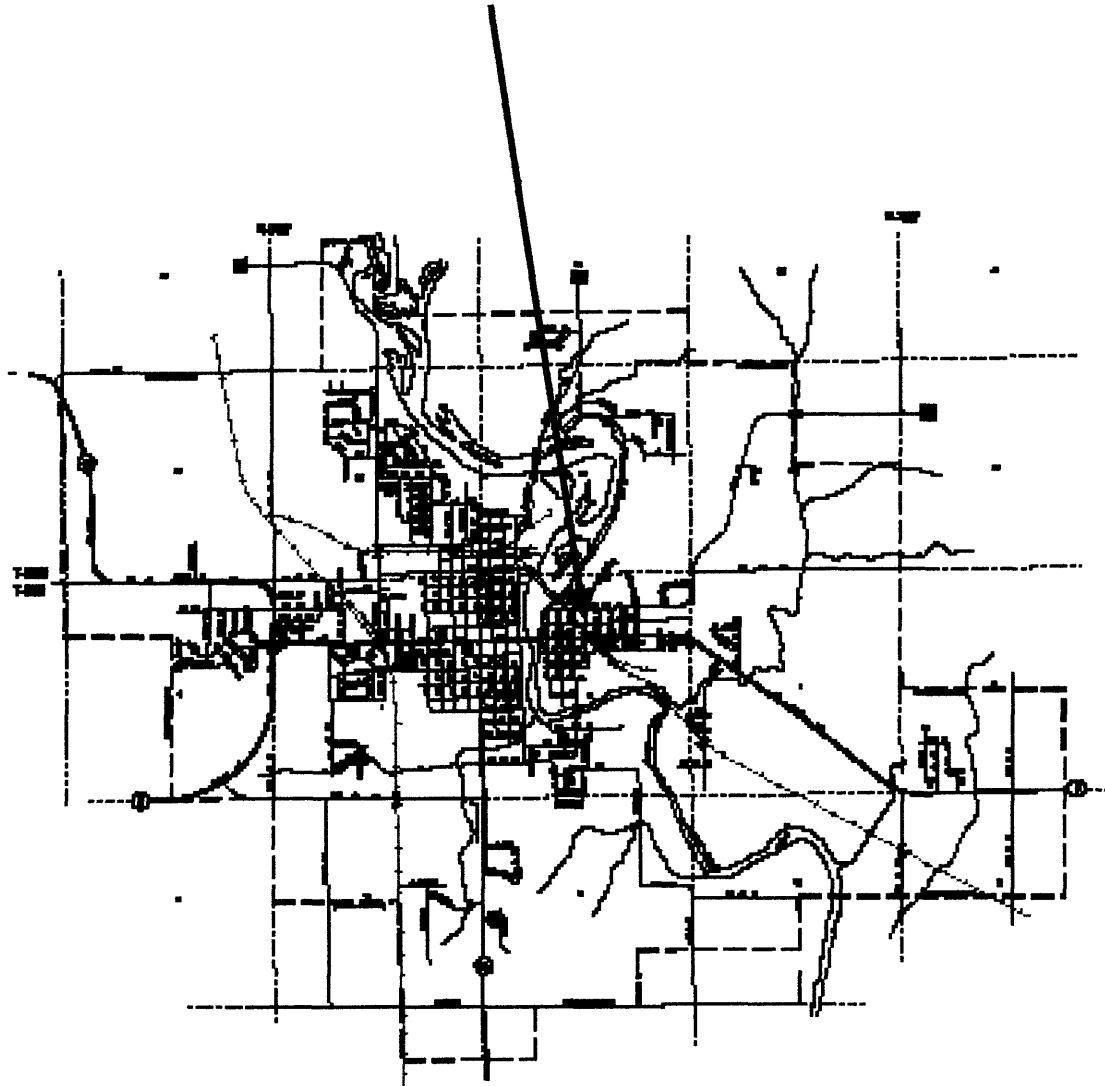
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Photographs

Bruce Meyer, photographer
Date taken: October 25, 2002

1. Front façade, looking north
2. Front and east façades, looking northwest
3. Rear & west façades, looking southeast
4. Front façade, center bay, looking north
5. Front entrance vestibule, looking south
6. Central corridor, pendant light
7. Courtroom, towards front of room, looking west
8. Courtroom, niche and judge's bench, looking west
9. Courtroom, door by jury box and judge's bench, looking northwest
10. Courtroom, towards rear of room, looking east