

IOWA SITE INVENTORY

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

MAY 29 1981

JL. #2 1981

Site Number 13-026-001
District Name _____
Map Reference # 13-026-001
Topo Map Fort Dodge NK 1:250,000

IDENTIFICATION

1. Site Name Calhoun County Courthouse
2. Village/Town/City Rockwell City Township _____ County Calhoun
3. Street Address N.W. corner Court and 4th Streets
4. Legal Location OT 5
Urban: subdivision block parcel subparcel
Rural: township range section 1/4 section-1/4 section
5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 365400 northing 4694700; Acreage less than 1 ac
6. Owner(s) Name Calhoun County Board of Supervisors
7. Owner(s) Address _____
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
Rockwell City Iowa 50579
8. Use: present Courthouse original Courthouse

DESCRIPTION

9. Date of Construction 1913-14 Architect/Builder W.F. Gemanth, Architect
10. Building Type: single family dwelling multiple family dwelling commercial
 industrial educational other institutional public religious agricultural
11. Exterior Walls: clapboard stone brick board & batten shingles stucco
 other _____
12. Structural System: wood frame with interlocking joints
 wood frame with light members (balloon frame) masonry load-bearing walls
 iron frame steel frame with curtain walls reinforced concrete
 other _____
13. Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated
14. Integrity: original site moved-if so, when? _____
Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site:
3-story rotunda capped with stained glass skylight - second floor, ceramic tile floors - coffered ceiling in courtroom.
Main doors replaced with aluminum
15. Related Outbuildings and Property: barn other farm structures
 carriage house garage privy other _____
16. Is the building endangered? no yes-if so, why? _____
17. Surroundings of the building: open land woodland scattered outbuildings
 densely built-up commercial industrial residential other _____
18. Map _____
19. Photo
Roll _____ Frame _____ View _____

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SIGNIFICANCE (Indicate sources of information for all statements)

20. Architectural Significance

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure c. Not eligible/intrusion

A significantly well-preserved courthouse, designed in a neoclassical vernacular style. The rotunda is especially good: in all, the interior (public spaces) is perhaps more interesting than the exterior.

21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) Politics/Government

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure c. Not eligible/intrusion

This courthouse is locally significant as the historical focus of county government, and of the political power and prestige derived from the community's status as the county seat. As center of county government, an Iowa town was reasonably assured of economic and population growth, and a prominent role in local social and political life. The county courthouse represents a significant public investment in a structure built not simply for utilitarian purposes, but also as a monument associated with the historical importance of county organization and development. This is the fourth courthouse for Calhoun County.

See Continuation Sheet

22. Sources (for primary and secondary sources, give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.):

- Andreas, A.T. Illustrated Historical Atlas of Iowa. Chicago: Andreas Atlas Co., 1875.
- Pratt, LeRoy G. The Counties and Courthouses of Iowa. Mason City, Iowa: Klipto Printing and Office Supply Co., 1977.
- Stanek, Edward and Jacqueline. Iowa's Magnificent County Courthouses. Des Moines: Wallace-Homestead Book Co., 1976.

Prepared by _____ Date January, 1980
 Address 26 E. Market St., Iowa City, Ia. 52240 Telephone 353-6949
 Organization Division of Historic Preservation

FOR DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION USE ONLY	
1. OFFICE INFORMATION SOURCES ON THIS PROPERTY	
<input type="checkbox"/> COUNTY RESOURCE FILE	<input type="checkbox"/> REVIEW AND COMPLIANCE PROJECT:
<input type="checkbox"/> WINDSHIELD SURVEY	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> NATIONAL REGISTER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____
<input type="checkbox"/> GRANTS-IN-AID: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____
<input type="checkbox"/> DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____
2. SUBJECT TRACES	3. PHOTO IMAGES _____
a. _____	_____
b. _____	_____
c. _____	_____
d. _____	_____
e. _____	_____

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Item Number(s) _____

CALHOUN COUNTY

When Calhoun County was first formed, in August, 1855, there were no buildings anywhere in the county which were useable as a courthouse. Therefore, until one was built the county business was done in the homes of the officials. After Lake City was selected as the county seat in 1856, a courthouse was built. It was a small structure and several additions and improvements were added after the initial section was constructed. The initial contract was for \$1,100.

In 1877 the county seat was moved to Rockwell City. This brought about the problem of a second courthouse. Some land was selected and the new courthouse was erected for slightly more than \$2,000. The first floor contained the county offices and vaults to hold the records and the second floor was the court room and jury room. This second courthouse was shortlived as a fire destroyed it in 1884. Fortunately, the records had been preserved in the vaults which sustained little damage.

Until the decision was made on what to do about a third courthouse, a building in town and the Lewis & Smith Hotel were rented, each for \$1 a day. Rather than rebuild the new courthouse in the same location as the old, the board of supervisors wanted it moved to a different location because the railroad was so close that it disturbed the court business. So the old courthouse square was sold and a new location directly west of the old one was selected. It was already owned by the county as a public park. This third courthouse was completed in 1886 and was used until it became dilapidated and too small for the county. On February 11, 1913, the contract was let for the new courthouse at a cost of \$102,600. The old courthouse building was moved to the west side of the square and used until the new one was completed. When the fourth courthouse was finished in 1914, the old building was sold to the Catholic Church and moved to be used as a parochial school.

This last courthouse was completed at a total cost of approximately \$116,200. The outside walls are limestone and the building has a red tile roof.

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