

HISTORIC NAME: Isanti County Courthouse

COUNTY: Isanti

CURRENT NAME:

CITY/TWP.: Cambridge

LEGAL DESC.: Lots 2,3,6, and 7, block 5, Original town

ADDRESS: 237 SW 2nd Avenue

CLASSIFICATION:	CONDITION:	SIGNIFICANCE:	THEME/S:
Building <u>  X  </u>	Excellent <u>      </u>	Local <u>  X  </u>	Primary <u>Government/Politics</u>
Structure <u>      </u>	Good <u>      X  </u>	State <u>      </u>	Secondary <u>      </u>
Object <u>      </u>	Fair <u>      </u>	National <u>      </u>	Others <u>      </u>
District <u>      </u>	Deteriorated <u>      </u>		

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:	Yes <u>  </u> No <u>  </u> Restricted <u>  X  </u>	PRESENT USE:
VISIBLE FROM THE ROAD:	Yes <u>  X  </u> No <u>  </u>	Courthouse
OCCUPIED:	Yes <u>  X  </u> No <u>  </u>	

DATE CONSTRUCTED: 1887 ORIGINAL USE: Courthouse

ORIGINAL OWNER: Isanti County ARCHITECT/BUILDER:

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS: Isanti County, Courthouse,  
237 SW 2nd Avenue, Cambridge, MNACREAGE: Less than one acre   X  

LOCAL CONTACT/ORG.:

UTM REFERENCE:  
Cambridge Quad.

FORM PREPARED BY: Britta Bloomberg

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DATE: December 1979

## DESCRIPTION:

The Isanti County Courthouse is prominently located on the southeast corner of 2nd Avenue SW and Birch Street, one block west of Cambridge's central business district. The large brick building is situated on a nicely landscaped corner lot and is a distinctive element in a predominantly residential neighborhood.

The two story frame building was constructed in 1887 and veneered in brick a few years later. The structure is basically rectangular with a projecting entrance pavilion. The high steeply-pitched roof of the pavilion, reminiscent of a mansard roof, and the vertical emphasis in the tall narrow windows demonstrate a local interpretation of the French Second Empire style. A small triangular dormer is located on each of the exposed sides of the pavilion roof. Roof surfaces are covered with dark grey slate. The building is three bays across and four bays deep; the tall windows are arranged in pairs with stone sills. A belt course of decorative brickwork circumvents the building between the two floors and beneath the eaves. The central entrance is framed by a simple classical doorway in brick and surmounted by a buff colored stone slab engraved with "Isanti County Courthouse". Small lamp posts supported by brick bases flank the entry.

Single window openings on the first floor on either side of the projecting pavilion and one west wall window have been bricked in. Markings on the brick indicate that an entry porch (which was not original but may have been added when the building was bricked) has been removed. Other exterior alterations include new windows, the addition of a west rear entry, and several smaller rear additions to accommodate additional county offices. These changes have not significantly altered the building's nineteenth century appearance.

The interior of the building has undergone a series of changes as it has been adapted to varying county needs over 92 years. Despite these changes, a significant degree of design integrity has been retained. The building continues to serve as the Isanti County Courthouse and is among the oldest courthouses in use in Minnesota.

## SIGNIFICANCE:

The Isanti County Courthouse is significant both as the principal structure associated with county government and development and as one of the oldest surviving courthouses in Minnesota in use today. Isanti County was formed February 13, 1857, from part of Ramsey County. The first courthouse was built in Cambridge in 1871; previously county officials kept their records individually and operated their offices out of their homes which were scattered across the county.

(see continuation sheet)

Isanti County Courthouse

Isanti County  
Cambridge, MN

The present structure was built in 1887 at a cost of \$10,000 and replaced the inadequate 1871 building. The construction of a more substantial courthouse at that time was indicative of the changes taking place in Isanti County by the late nineteenth century: the transient early period of the county was giving way to more stable patterns of settlement during the 1880s, and the need was increasing for more space and permanent quarters for county government. The city of Cambridge itself was fast becoming an important trade center between Minneapolis-St. Paul and Duluth. The courthouse has sheltered the official county proceedings and records for ninety-two years, and is significant for the long history it records of the county's government and development.