

# IOWA SITE INVENTORY

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

MAY 29 1981

Site Number 81-018-001  
District Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Map Reference # 81-018-001  
Topo Map Ft. Dodge NK 1:250,000

## IDENTIFICATION

1. Site Name Sac County Courthouse  
2. Village/Town/City Sac City Township \_\_\_\_\_ County Sac  
3. Street Address Main between West State and East State  
4. Legal Location OT Courthouse Square  
Urban: subdivision block parcel subparcel  
Rural: township range section 1/4 section-1/4 section  
5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 336400 northing 4698400; Acreage less than 1 ac  
6. Owner(s) Name Sac County Board of Supervisors  
7. Owner(s) Address Courthouse Sac City Iowa 50583  
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)  
8. Use: present Courthouse original Courthouse

## DESCRIPTION

9. Date of Construction 1889 Architect/Builder J.M. Russell, 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: Transoms and upper portions of windows blocked from inside - large addition northeast corner 1977- original entrance area used for office space. Note pressed tin ceilings, tile floor in main space - wooden staircase - some wood floors - colored glass in transom panels - tower removed 1900.  
15. Related Outbuildings and Property:  barn  other farm structures  
 carriage house  garage  privy  other \_\_\_\_\_  
16. Is the building endangered?  no  yes-if so, why? \_\_\_\_\_  
17. Surroundings of the building:  open land  woodland  scattered outbuildings  
 densely built-up  commercial  industrial  residential  other \_\_\_\_\_  
18. Map \_\_\_\_\_ 19. Photo  
Roll \_\_\_\_\_ Frame \_\_\_\_\_ View \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNIFICANCE (Indicate sources of information for all statements)**

**20. Architectural Significance**

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

This is basically vernacular architecture, with slight reference to the Romanesque in the arched entrances with large stone voussoirs and the gable ends with shoulder parapets. Very local significance.

**21. Historical Significance**

Theme(s) Politics/Government

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

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

See Continuation Sheet

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

Andreas, A.T. Illustrated Historical Atlas of Iowa. Chicago: Andreas Atlas Co., 1875.

Pratt, LeRoy G. The Counties and Courthouses of Iowa. Mason City, Iowa: Klipto Printing and Office Supply Co., 1977.

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

Prepared by \_\_\_\_\_ Date January, 1980  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
Organization DHP

**FOR DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION USE ONLY**

**1. OFFICE INFORMATION SOURCES ON THIS PROPERTY**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> COUNTY RESOURCE FILE         | <input type="checkbox"/> REVIEW AND COMPLIANCE PROJECT: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> WINDSHIELD SURVEY            | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NATIONAL REGISTER            | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GRANTS-IN-AID: _____         | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____                    |

**2. SUBJECT TRACES**

**3. PHOTO IMAGES 161/4**

- a. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_  
d. \_\_\_\_\_  
e. \_\_\_\_\_

CONTINUATION SHEET

Item Number(s)

SAC COUNTY

Bonds in the amount of \$10,000 were authorized by the residents of Sac County at an election held on July 7, 1860, for the purpose of building the first county courthouse. The total number of votes cast was only 41. The contract for this courthouse was awarded to a Fort Dodge builder. The specifications for the building required that it be made of brick, be 34 by 46 feet at its base, with a six-foot-high foundation. The first story had a nine-foot ceiling and sixteen-inch-thick walls. The second story with its one-foot-thick walls and thirteen-foot-high ceiling was finished into a courtroom. All of the woodwork was painted with three coats of white lead, except for some varnished oak and pine.

On March 13, 1873, the bids for the erection of the second courthouse were let. Its cement foundation cost \$1,500. Its four vaults cost \$400. The 84 by 56 foot limestone foundation supported its brick walls. The total cost of construction was \$30,000. This building burned on October 3, 1888. A \$200 reward prompted a constable of Lake City to arrest the arsonist who was convicted and sentenced to 12 years in the penitentiary.

The citizens of Sac County formed a company and pledged themselves to duplicate the new courthouse which had just been finished at Storm Lake. The county had received \$15,000 in insurance money after the burning of the previous courthouse, and the company of citizens raised an additional \$15,000 to complete their desired reproduction in 1889. Although the tower was removed in 1900 and a new slate roof was put on in 1911, the building appears relatively the same today as when it was first erected.

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