

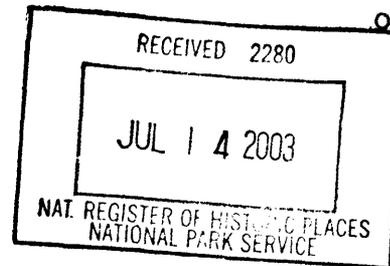
JUL 10 2003

NPS Form 10-900  
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



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

Name of Property

historic name Warren County Court House

other names/site number P.W.A. Docket IA 1290-F

2. Location

street & number 115 N. Howard Avenue N/A  not for publication

city or town Indianola N/A  vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Warren code 181 zip code 50125

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. Sirke* *July 10, 2003*

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

**STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA**

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

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

~~Entered in the~~ National Register  
Signature of the Keeper

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): \_\_\_\_\_



**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**

1939 - 1953

**Significant Dates**

1939

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Keffer & Jones, architect

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository:

Warren County Auditor's Office

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of Property Less than 10 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	[1] [5]	[4] [5] [3] [0] [4] [0]	[4] [5] [7] [8] [7] [9] [0]	2	[ ] [ ]	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
3	[ ] [ ]	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]	4	[ ] [ ]	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

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

**Boundary Justification**

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

**11. Form Prepared By**

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

organization for State Historical Society of Iowa date November 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 Warren County, c/o Traci VanderLinden, Auditor

street & number 301 N. Buxton, Suite 101 telephone 515-961-1020

city or town Indianola state IA zip code 50125

**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.

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**7. Description**

**Site:** The Warren County Court House (contributing) was built in 1938-1939 on a square-block site (contributing) at the center of the block bounded by W. Ashland Avenue on the north, N. Howard Avenue on the east, W. Salem Avenue on the south, and N. Buxton Avenue on the west. The courthouse square is the centerpiece of the downtown business district of Indianola, Iowa. The courthouse site itself is flat with deliberately curved corners and a gentle slope from west to east. A secondary set of walks surrounding the building have similar curved edges with walks leading to the streets leading to the compass points. The previous county courthouse stood on this site prior to construction of the current building but no historic archeological investigation has been made to determine the presence of foundations or other building remains.

The site is densely covered with a mix of mature deciduous trees and conifers on the north, east, and south sides and ornamentals on the west side. Scattered amidst the trees are a series of commemorative features installed within the past 30 years. A small frame gazebo (non-contributing) is located southwest of the courthouse, a flag pole (non-contributing) is in the northeast quadrant, a memorial flower garden with a small bronze figure of a gardener is in the southeast quadrant, and a time capsule buried in 1949 is set beneath a low stone on the north side of the building. An asphalt-paved parking lot is located along the west side of the building. Park benches line several of the sidewalk approaches.

Indianola's central business district extends around the courthouse square. One-way traffic moves counterclockwise around the square with angle parking along both sides of the street. One and two-story masonry commercial buildings dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries surround the square. The present day county offices are located in the former Indianola High School (listed on the National Register of Historic Places), which was acquired and rehabilitated in 1998 to serve as the Warren County Administration Building. It is located two blocks northwest of the courthouse along N. Buxton Avenue. Churches and single-family residences extend along blocks that ring the central business district and the courthouse square.

**Exterior:** The Warren County Court House is one of ten courthouses built during the federal Public Works Administration (PWA) program's operation in the 1930s.. It has a rectangular footprint measuring approximately 113½ feet by 65 feet with the front oriented toward the east. The courthouse is constructed of poured concrete with a brick and stone facing. Building plans show the stone was supplied by the Swenson Stone Company of Bloomington, Indiana described by the supplier as "Select variegated stone rubbed finish." The foundation is concrete with stone facing on portions of the front while the walls are faced in buff-colored brick set in a light gray-colored mortar. Decorative cut stone is of Bedford limestone. A communication antenna is mounted on the courthouse roof.

**Front elevation:** On the front or east elevation, the building's central section is five bays wide with a height of 3½ stories or approximately 46 feet. Two-story wings 10 feet shorter than the central

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section are located at the north and south ends of the building. A raised basement or ground floor extends beneath the entire building. The central section's bays are separated by six fluted stone pilasters that extend from the top of the foundation to the upper edge of the second floor windows. The simplified pilasters have no bases or capitals. A wide stone band extends above the center section windows and bears the inscription "Warren County." Weathering has destroyed the original gilding from the lettering. The north and south wings project forward slightly from the central section of the building. The central section of each wing is clad in square stone panels with brick wall sections to either side. A stone coping extends along the parapet. A narrow stone beltcourse and watertable extend along the first floor.

The concrete entrance steps are centered on the front elevation between solid cut stone balustrades. The building's original bronze light standards have a simplified Art Deco design with white opaque glass panels and are approximately 5 feet in height. They are set on the lower levels of massive square-cut stone balustrade blocks to either side of the entrance steps. The lights remain operable.

The front entrance surround has cut-stone quarter columns flanking the double doors and transom. The columns are embellished with serpentine cuts. The metal and plate glass entrance doors are replacements likely installed in ca. 1990 at the same time that new windows were installed throughout the building. The new windows are fabricated of metal with a white finish with brown metal infill panels in the top and a 1/1 configuration in the lower two-thirds. All of the windows have stone sills and lintels of varying dimensions.

**Side elevations:** On the north and south elevations, the courthouse has seven narrow bays with a height of two stories or 28 feet. Like the front, the wings have raised foundations only in this case poured concrete, brick walls, and stone trim for the windows. A continuous stone beltcourse also provides the window lintels for the second floor openings. The second floor window openings have wide cut-stone decorative pieces at the top of each bay featuring oversized dentils and curved lower edges. Unlike the north façade, the south elevation contains an entrance in the west half. The below grade stairwell has a pipe railing balustrade

**Rear elevation:** The original rear or west elevation had a substantial new masonry addition constructed in 1988. It measures 36 feet (east/west) by 50 feet (north/south) and is centered on the west façade. The masonry materials closely match the original buff-colored brick walls and Bedford limestone trim. The walls of the addition have recessed brick bays with stone trim used for sills, beltcourses, bands, and decorative squares. There are no windows on the ground floor and a minimal number of openings on the first and second levels. A Palladian window is located at the top of the center bay over a sloping window that serves as a skylight to allow natural light into the addition's two-story entrance atrium. A slanted stone-clad canopy is suspended over the entrance doors and wide sidelights.

The north and south wings of the west façade remain unaltered. Their outer edges are clad in brick

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and the central section of each wing is clad in square stone panels. A stone coping extends along the parapet and a narrow stone beltcourse and watertable extend along the first floor. A service entrance is located just south of the new addition connecting to the building's secondary stairwell and original sallyport or loading area.

***Interior Floor Plan:*** The Warren County Court House has a central corridor plan similar to those of the other nine PWA-Era Courthouses in Iowa. The front entrance is located midway along the east façade opening into an entrance vestibule set between the ground level and the first floor. On the interior, this vestibule is set perpendicular to the central corridor, which runs the length of the building. Individual county offices were originally located along the first and ground floors. Circulation between floors in the courthouse was originally via the central staircase located opposite the front entrance vestibule. Secondary staircases are located in the southwest and northwest corners of the building. The district courtroom and related offices were originally located on the second floor and the county jail was installed on the third floor.

Major changes in the floor plan occurred in 1988, 1990-91, and in 1998. The 1988 addition provided additional office space for the sheriff and jail areas. The 1990-91 remodeling saw a reassignment of offices, updating of mechanical systems, and the addition of a new courtroom. In 1998 major changes were made when all administrative functions of the county not related to the court system or jail were removed to the Warren County Administration Center located in the former Indianola High School. Additional courtrooms were added along with office space for special services related to the court system.

Design elements and finishes for the most important spaces in the courthouse are discussed in greater detail below.

***Entrance vestibule:*** The front entrance vestibule has terrazzo floors, salt glazed tile in the wainscoting, and rough textured tile in the upper half of the walls. The tan colored terrazzo floors are in two patterns with larger chipped stone in the center section and smaller stone in the borders. The tile wainscot was painted in the 1990s. The radiator is not recessed or covered with a metal panel. The original double doors separating the vestibule from the main corridor on the first floor are painted metal and glass with chrome hardware. Sidelights flanking the doors are filled with glass block and the transom over the doors has three horizontal plain glass lights.

***Public corridors:*** The first floor main corridor has a two-tone terrazzo floor (light tan and darker tan) and base (darker tan). The original salt glazed tile in the wainscoting measure approximately 5 inches by 7 inches with the wainscoting extending to a height of approximately 7 feet. Rough textured unglazed tile covers the balance of the wall surface. The rough textured tile was painted in the 1990s but the glazed tile wainscoting retains its golden tan color. The ceiling has a suspended acoustic tile ceiling (not original) with recessed fluorescent light fixtures. Most of the doors opening onto the corridor have glass block sidelights and new metal doors. The original metal door remains on the janitor's closet. The opening for a drinking fountain retains its original recessed glazed tile

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surround.

A pair of commemorative bronze tablets hangs in the south hall in this area. One cites the "Federal Works Agency – Public Works Administration" as the funding source for the courthouse and giving the construction date of 1939. It measures 21 by 31 inches. A second plaque measuring 14 by 21 inches lists the board of supervisors, auditor, architects, contractors, and construction superintendent. According to construction file correspondence, both were ordered from the Oregon Brass Works and were designed to not only commemorate the project but comply with P.W.A. Bulletin R.D. No. 19 which spelled out the obligations of owners for all non-federal construction projects.

The principal change to the main public corridors on each level is the elimination of the original central staircase midway along the west wall. New connecting corridors to the law enforcement wing were installed in place of the staircase when the 1988 addition was constructed. Original staircases located in the south and north ends of the main corridors were retained. A glass firewall with double doors now separates the old building from the new addition on the first and second floors. Terrazzo flooring closely matching the original was installed in the connecting corridors at each level in 1988.

The balance of the ground and second floor main corridors are finished in a similar manner as the first floor with a few exceptions. On the second floor, glazed tile-clad square support columns are located at the top of the former central staircase and new lowered ceilings are covered with acoustic tile and recessed lights. The ground floor has a lower ceiling height with acoustic tile, recessed lights, and new mechanical systems in place above the ceiling.

**County offices:** Removal of the county offices from the courthouse in 1998 brought substantial alterations to the original plan. Service counters have been removed, inner office partition walls constructed, suspended ceilings installed with recessed lights and new mechanical systems, original doors and hardware replaced for the most part, and a number of security measures introduced. In one case, a former entrance opening's door and sidelights have been replaced with a new service counter opening directly onto the corridor. Several office areas were converted to additional courtrooms. Walls are either tiled or plastered. Flooring is generally carpeted in the non-public areas.

**Court room:** The most important space aesthetically and functionally in any courthouse is usually the courtroom. Located on the second floor facing the front of the building (east) this room has a two-story ceiling height that extends into the third floor. Floors in the courtroom and various offices and conference rooms along the south end and north ends of the building are covered in carpeting laid over the original asphalt tile specified for this space. The ceiling in the courtroom has a dropped acoustic tile finish with recessed fluorescent lights and ceiling fans. Walls are covered in a combination of wood wainscoting and plaster. The wainscoting is constructed of an undetermined wood species with horizontal grained panels set between vertical dividers. The top molding has a

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fluted design. A similar wood species is used for all other wood elements in the courtroom. The raised jury box that is located on the right side of the courtroom has a narrow walkway separating it from the right (west) wall. The jury box has a gray marble baseboard, wood paneled sides, and its original upholstered pedestal seats. Unlike most courtrooms, there was never a bar separating the audience seating from the counsel area and jury box. The audience seating consists of double-width oak benches or pews with side aisles. The original judge's bench at the front of the courtroom is raised two steps above the main floor. It has no elaborate backdrop and instead includes a flag suspended between two metal doors along the front (south) wall. The judge's bench is dark stained wood to match the wainscoting and pews. Desks for the court reporter and clerk as well as the witness stand remain unaltered from their original relatively simple design. The counsel tables and chairs are replacement furnishings.

The judge's chambers, law library, jury room, and other related offices are located along the south end of the second floor behind the judge's bench. These areas can be accessed through doors located to either side of the judge's bench or from the main public corridor.

The Warren County Court House courtroom is not as elegantly outfitted as other PWA-Era courthouses. Its most significant historic feature is the approximately 20-foot long black walnut board that hangs on the wall behind the jury box. The inscription indicates that the board was milled 1843 on the Middle River and was the "first milled in Warren County."

The major alteration to the courtroom space was a reduction in floor size carried out in ca. 1998. At this time the rear (north) wall of the courtroom was foreshortened and several rows of benches/pews were removed.

**Law Enforcement Addition:** In 1988 architects Frevert Ramsey Kobes of west Des Moines designed a courthouse addition for the west side of the building. The addition houses offices and related spaces for the county sheriff and jail as well as a new entrance lobby, elevator and stairwell. Entrance at the west side of the addition is at the ground level into a lobby with a ceiling height of nearly 17 feet. A set of doublewide steps leads to the first floor. Walls of the entrance lobby and solid balustrade for the steps are clad in white marble. A polished brass handrail is mounted top of the balustrade. A plaster cornice featuring indirect fluorescent lights set in semi-circular plastic tubes approximately 30 feet long is mounted on stepped soffits along the north and south sides of the ceiling. Additional natural light enters the space via the tinted glass windows over the entrance doors. The elevator is located north of the staircase with a lobby at the ground level opening towards the west and an entrance onto the first floor opening towards the east.

The second floor of the addition contains an elevator lobby, a corridor leading to the original building, and offices for the sheriff's department. Flooring in the public areas of the second floor in the addition closely matches the terrazzo of the original building. All doors are oak. The third floor of the addition now serves as the sole entrance into the third floor jail space. A dispatcher desk is located outside of the elevator with various offices and conference rooms occupying the balance of

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the addition's third floor.

**Jail:** The county jail continues to occupy the original portions of the third floor designated for jail use. Numerous remodeling projects have seen changes made to this space but the original cells and day rooms in the north half remain intact. The sheriff's residence located in the south half has been remodeled to contain addition cells, storage rooms, and another day room for prisoners.

***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 Buildings: courthouse
- 1 Non-contributing Structure: gazebo
- 1 Contributing Site: courthouse square
- 1 Contributing Object: flagpole

***Summary of alterations:***

- New west wing constructed and connections made to original building, 1988
- New metal windows, ca. 1990
- Mechanical system work, minor remodeling of various offices and rest rooms, 1990-91
- Removal of county administrative offices, adaptation of offices for courtrooms, ca. 1998

The changes made to the Warren County Court House are consistent with the registration requirements set forth under Section F.iv.c of the "PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa" MPD, pp. F45-F48. The most significant change the courthouse was the construction of the law enforcement addition in 1988. The MPD integrity requirements stipulate that additions such as that done for the Warren County Court House be made on non-principal façades and that choices for materials, design elements, scale and setback be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Buildings. The law enforcement addition is located on the west or rear façade of the courthouse and brick and limestone detailing match that of the original building. Despite its substantial size it remains invisible from the front of the courthouse.

In the building's interior, integration of the new law enforcement addition with the original courthouse has been accomplished with a minimum of modifications. The most serious was the loss of the central staircase at the point where the wing joins. The retention of central corridors, openings, and both wall tile and terrazzo finishes has kept the appearance of the courthouse similar to the original.

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The use of similar terrazzo floors in the new addition has kept continuity between the new and old. The new entrance and central staircase have switched the orientation from the front to the rear, which is regrettable.

The introduction of new windows throughout the building is consistent with the MPD registration requirements. All of the openings have retained their original size with replacement sash incorporating metal transoms where reduced size sash have been installed.

The other major change in the courthouse has been the removal of most of the county offices to another building in order to provide more space for additional courtrooms, jail cell blocks, day rooms, juvenile facilities, probation offices, and offices for the clerk's offices. These modifications are consistent with the changes required for the change in use but have minimal impact on the important public spaces (courtroom and corridors).

Selected floor plans prepared in September and October 1938 prior to the courthouse's construction appear on the following pages.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Quality of the original floor plans reproduced in this nomination is very poor accounting for the bad images seen here. 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.

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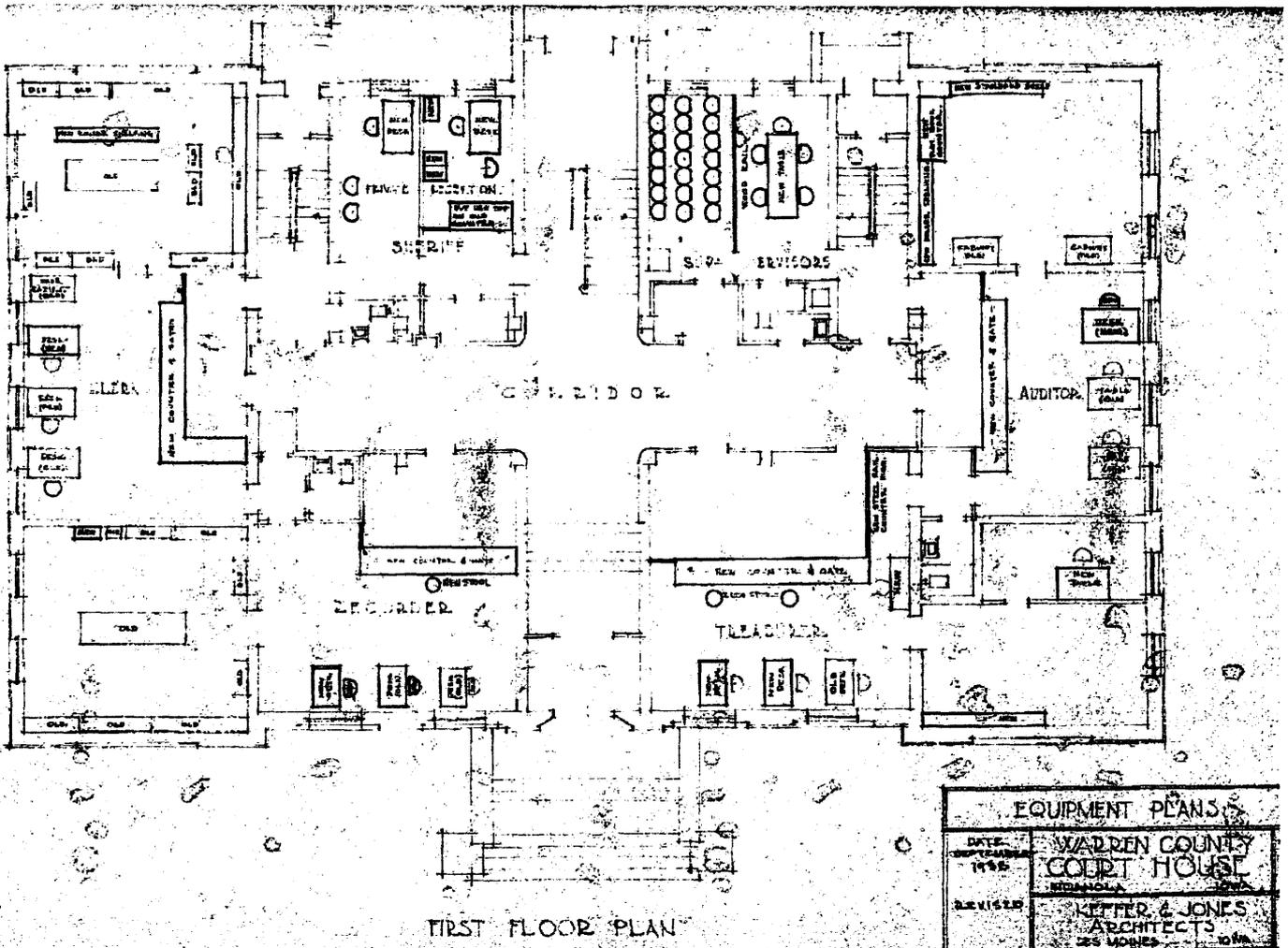
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**Warren County Court House, First Floor Plan, 1938<sup>2</sup>**



<sup>2</sup>Floor Plans by Keffer & Jones, (at Auditor's Office, Warren County Court House), September & October 1938.

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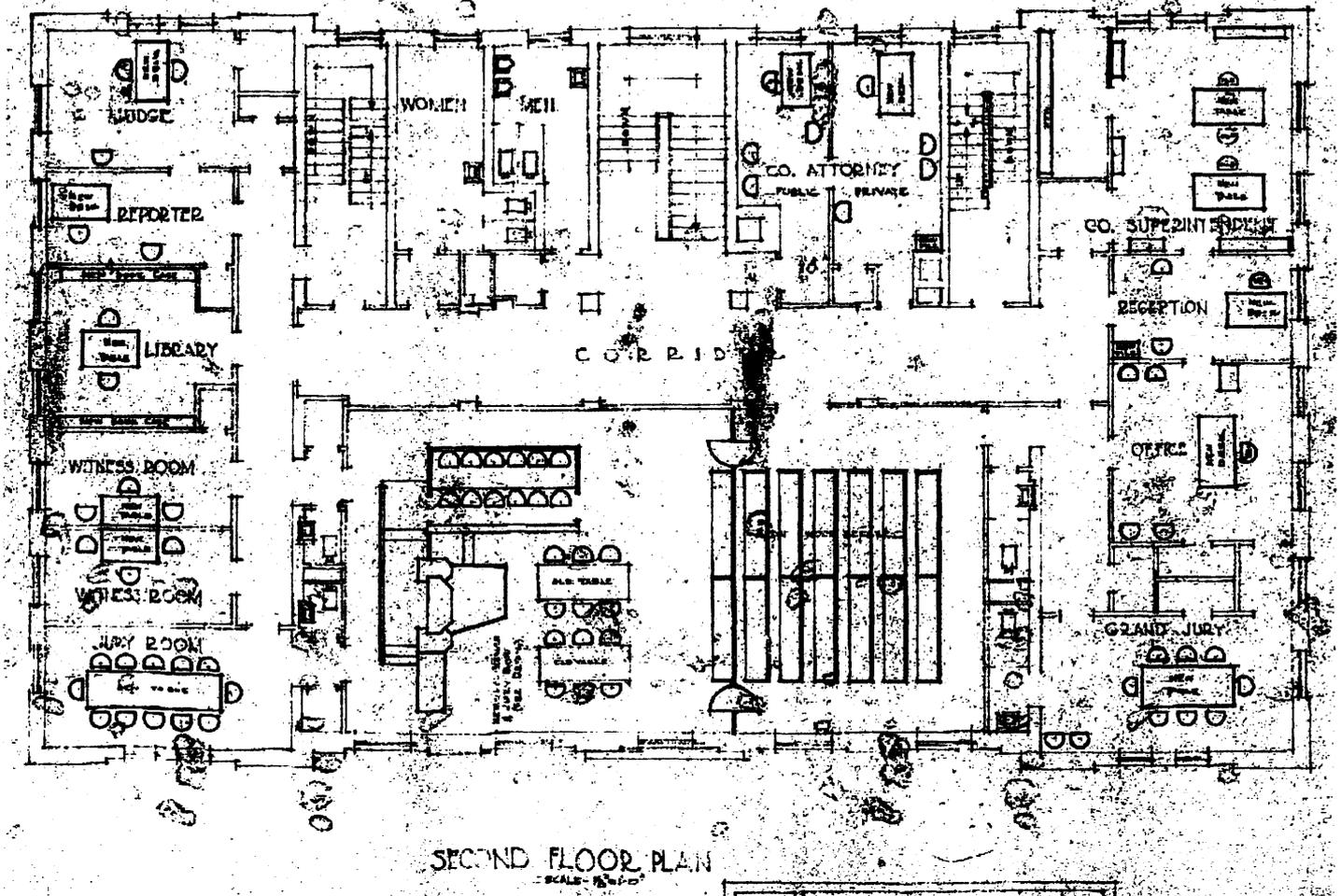
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**Warren County Court House, Second Floor Plan, 1938** →  
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**8. Statement of Significance**

***Architect/Builder:*** (continued)

F.B. Dickinson & Co., builder  
Frevert, Ramsey, Kobes (1988, architect)  
Ringland Johnson Crowley (1988, builder)

***Introduction:***

The Warren 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 county that was hard pressed by the effects of the Great Depression. Designed by Keffer and Jones of Des Moines, an important Iowa architectural firm responsible for the design of numerous PWA funded public buildings, it is a well-preserved example of the PWA Moderne style of public building architecture developed during the 1930s and early 1940s. Its design blends Art Deco and Moderne style elements with the utilitarian advantages of modern office building construction. Nomination of the Warren County Court House is consistent with the registration requirements set forth in Section F of the "PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa" MPD.

***Historical Background:***

***i. New Deal Era and the Public Works Administration:***

In June 1933 near the end of Franklin Roosevelt's first one hundred days in office, Congress passed the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) creating two important federal initiatives designed to combat the Depression. The National Recovery Administration 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.<sup>3</sup> He appointed his good friend Harry Hopkins to head the newly established Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and Civil Works

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<sup>3</sup>Arthur 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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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. These boards were criticized and by February 1934 were discontinued.<sup>4</sup>

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

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

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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.<sup>5</sup>

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

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

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

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

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<sup>5</sup>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.372-373.

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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 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.<sup>6</sup> 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

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

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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.<sup>7</sup>

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 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

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<sup>7</sup>*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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- 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 valuation<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9</sup>

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

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

An example of such a campaign was seen on the front pages of the *Indianola Record* in 1936 and 1937. During the summer of 1936 the Warren County Federated Women's Clubs had the courthouse as part of their quarterly meeting. Following the meeting the *Indianola Record* carried an extensive article with the opinions of various members, both pro and con, cited. The newspaper

<sup>8</sup>Application 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.

<sup>9</sup>Agreement 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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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."<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup>

A third reason frequently given for erecting a courthouse in the midst of a national economic depression related to the cost of bonds. Architect Karl Keffer combined all of these arguments when he spoke to the Audubon Board of Supervisors in August 1938. He said that the "primary reason Audubon County should have a new courthouse is because county records are not safe in case of fire in the present building. The secondary reason is that it would be to the county's financial advantage not only to secure the government grant but to take advantage of present low interest rates county bonds carry."<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup>

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

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

<sup>11</sup>"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.

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

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

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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 <sup>14</sup>
Cass Co., Atlantic Federal Public Works Project No. 1410	1934	Dougher, Rich & Woodburn, Des Moines, Iowa	C.C. Larsen Co., Council Bluffs, Iowa	\$130,000
Bremer Co., Waverly P.W.A. Docket IA 1338-R	1937	Mortimer Cleveland, Waterloo, Iowa	Drape Construction Co., Tripoli, Iowa	\$135,000
Jones Co., Anamosa P.W.A. Docket IA 1068-R	1937	Dougher, Rich & Woodburn, Des Moines, Iowa	C.C. Larsen & Sons Co., Council Bluffs, Iowa	\$200,000
Humboldt Co., Dakota City P.W.A. Docket IA 1351-DS	1939	Dougher, Rich & Woodburn, Des Moines, Iowa	Holtze Construction Co., Sioux City, Iowa	\$185,000
Warren Co., Indianola P.W.A. Docket IA 1290-F	1939	Keffer & Jones, Des Moines, Iowa	F.B. Dickinson & Co., Des Moines, Iowa	\$145,000
Audubon Co., Audubon P.W.A. Docket IA 1586-F	1939	Keffer & Jones, Des Moines, Iowa	J.C. Mayer, Clarion, Iowa	\$133,000
Buchanan Co., Independence P.W.A. Docket IA 1447-F	1940	Dougher, Rich & Woodburn, Des Moines, Iowa	C.C. Larsen & Sons Co., Council Bluffs, Iowa	\$254,000
Des Moines Co., Burlington P.W.A. Docket IA 1529-F	1940	Keffer & Jones, Des Moines, Iowa	Paul Steenberg Construction Co., St. Paul, Minnesota	\$280,000
Allamakee Co., Waukon Federal project # unknown	1940	Charles Altfillisch, Decorah, Iowa	Rye & Henkel, Mason City, Iowa	\$202,000
Floyd Co., Charles City Not funded with PWA assistance	1941	Hansen & Waggoner, Mason City, Iowa	James Thompson & Sons, Ames, Iowa	\$265,000

**iii. Building the Warren County Court House:**

Indianola was established as the county seat of Warren County in 1849 when commissioners for the county selected an 80-acre site for a new town naming it after Indianola, Texas. The new community was to be five blocks square with the central block reserved for construction of the

<sup>14</sup>Original 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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courthouse. Indianola is one of only a few counties in Iowa that has not experienced difficulty in locating its county seat. The first county courthouse was a log building erected on the courthouse square in 1851. A second more permanent courthouse was erected on the square in 1868 and continued in use until it was razed to allow construction of the present Warren County Court House in 1938.

Population in Warren County grew from 17,980 at the end of the Civil War in 1870 to a peak of 20,376 in 1900. By 1930 population had declined to 17,700, a figure that remained virtually unchanged during the balance of the decade. The change in national leadership in 1933 saw the creation of a series of federal programs designed to combat this national malaise. Among the most active programs to find their way to the county level were the Public Works Administration (PWA), the Works Progress Administration (WPA), and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). All became active in Warren County by the decade's end.

The most important project undertaken through the PWA was the effort to construct a new Warren County courthouse. Plans to build a new courthouse with aid of a PWA grant were first floated in 1936. Structural problems had been discovered the previous year and numerous articles regarding the condition of the 1868 courthouse appeared in local papers. A PWA grant for \$58,050 was sought by the board of supervisors and approved but on November 3, 1936 voters defeated a referendum necessary to bond for the remaining \$80,000 to erect the new building. The condition of the courthouse did not change, however, and two years later the PWA contacted the county to ascertain whether there might be renewed interest in building a courthouse. The board of supervisors agreed to accept a grant of \$65,250 and a special election was scheduled for August 10, 1938 to secure the support of voters for the issuance of \$80,000 in bonds.

In the weeks leading up to the vote local newspapers carried a flurry of articles about the continued deterioration in the 1868 building and the threats posed to irreplaceable county records. One column argued that Warren County residents would be paying substantial federal taxes to support government spending and deserved to get their share of federal program dollars. During the months leading up to the election, the board of supervisors worked with architects Keffer and Jones of Des Moines to prepare preliminary plans and sketches. This was the first of three county courthouses that Keffer and Jones would design in Iowa. Another important project completed by the firm in the area was the Indianola High School in 1924. It is likely that the firm agreed to accept a stipulation in their contract that allowed no fees to be paid for the initial design work should voters reject the courthouse proposal. The fee structure for the contract was typical of other PWA project contracts limiting the billable amount to 5 percent of the building's construction cost.<sup>15</sup>

On election day, the referendum overwhelmingly carried by a vote of 2,223 to 1,286.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Agreement Between Architects and Owners, " Keffer and Jones, architects, and the Audubon County Board of Supervisors, owner, dated July 29, 1938; Audubon County Auditor's Office.

<sup>16</sup>Schultz, Gerald and Don L. Berry, *History of Warren County*, (Indianola, Iowa: The Record & Tribune Co.),

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Registration for construction jobs in connection with the courthouse project began shortly after the referendum carried. Registration was to be handled through the county relief office with various contractors hiring unskilled workers from the registration rolls to supplement their skilled workers. The first indication that there would be labor dissension on the project came during September when representatives of several Des Moines labor unions met with members of the board of supervisors to protest the prevailing wage rates for the job. The board indicated that wages would be set by the architect with PWA approval. Newspaper accounts noted that supervisors expressed concern that the courthouse jobs go to local workers and not Des Moines trade unions.<sup>17</sup>

Bidding was intense for the courthouse construction contracts. Contractors from around the state submitted bids, with 12 separate bids received on the general construction contract alone. On September 24, 1938 the general construction contract was awarded to low-bidder F.B. Dickinson & Co. of Des Moines. This bid came in at \$99,353. Low bidders for the mechanical contracts were Hooknagle & Miller of Dallas Center and Capital City Electric Co. of Des Moines. The total for the initial construction contracts totaled \$117,444. When bonds were sold in November 1938 to the Peoples Trust & Savings Bank of Indianola, a highly favorable interest rate of 1¾ percent was secured, well below pre-Depression Era rates of 5 percent.<sup>18</sup>

Construction began on October 6, 1938 with razing of the old courthouse. The site was excavated and pouring of concrete was underway in mid-November. Later that month, labor troubles reappeared when a Des Moines union organizer sought to have a carpenter removed from the job because he was being paid 80 cents per hour, substantially less than the \$1.22½ hourly rate for Des Moines carpenters. In response, local carpenters organized a local union setting their local wage scale at just under the 80 cents per hour being paid by the courthouse contract.<sup>19</sup> Labor troubles may have continued but they disappeared from the front pages of the local newspaper.

On December 3, 1938 with considerable concrete work completed and brickwork underway, the cornerstone for the new courthouse was placed with considerable pomp and ceremony. Work proceeded at a steady pace throughout the winter months on schedule or ahead of schedule. A workforce of approximately 40 men were employed throughout the project representing 28 trades and occupations according to Lester C. Landon, resident engineer for the PWA. The courthouse was scheduled for completion in July 1939.<sup>20</sup>

Formal dedication of the new Warren County Court House was held on August 24, 1939. A full day of ceremonies included a historical parade described by promoters as "mammoth," band concerts, sporting events, judging for a whisker derby and sunbonnet contest, a free barbecue, an old fiddlers' contest, and street dances. The afternoon's dedication ceremony followed the parade and included

1953, p. 38.

<sup>17</sup>"Labor Troubles Developing Over New Courthouse," *The Indianola Tribune*, September 1938.

<sup>18</sup>"Local Bank Buys \$80,000 Bonds for Courthouse," *The Indianola Tribune*, November 1938.

<sup>19</sup>"Forefall Move of D.M. Union at New Courthouse," *The Indianola Tribune*, November 1938.

<sup>20</sup>"New Courthouse Ready to Occupy About July 1st," *The Indianola Tribune*, undated 1939.

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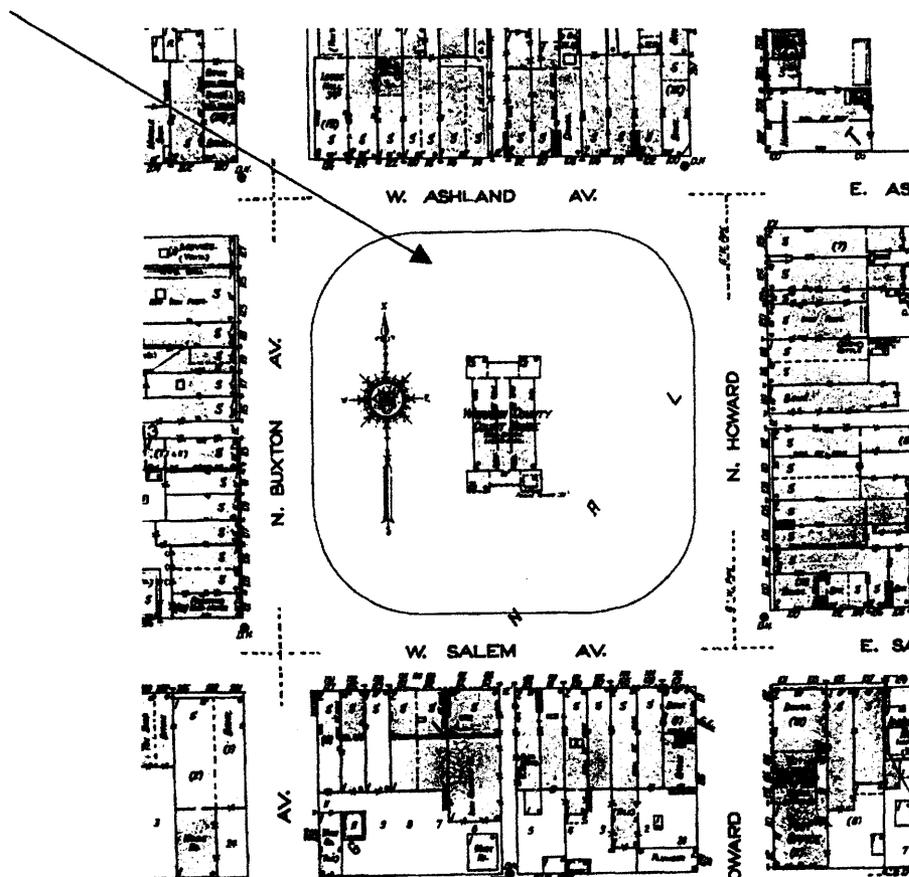
remarks by Senator William S. Beardsley and a dedication address by Dr. John O. Gross, president of Simpson College in Indianola. Dozens of public officials including representatives of the regional PWA office were in attendance.<sup>21</sup>

On September 5, 1939 with the new courtroom completed and furnished, the grand jury was convened and the following week the first district court trial was held. All other county offices were in place by September 1, 1939.

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

**Warren County Court House, 1926<sup>22</sup>**

N ↑



<sup>21</sup>“Estimated 12,000 to 15,000 People Witness Big Parade,” *The Indianola Tribune*, August 30, 1939.

<sup>22</sup>*Insurance Maps of Indianola, Iowa*. (New York: The Sanborn and Perris Map Company) 1926 updated to post-1939, p.2.

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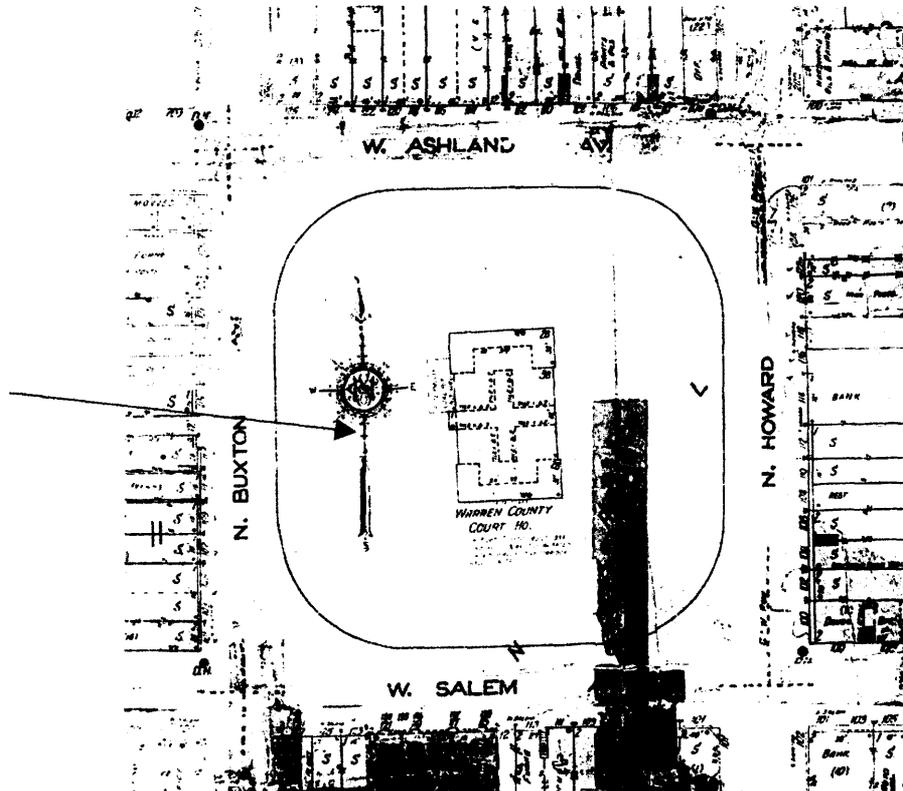
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**Warren County Court House, post-1939<sup>23</sup>**

**N ↑**



**iv. Architectural significance:**

The Warren County Court House was designed by the firm of Keffer and Jones whose offices were in Des Moines 20 miles northwest of Indianola. Karl K. Keffer (1883-1954) and Earl E. Jones (1885-1950) formed their partnership in 1916 following the death of Keffer's earlier partner, Oliver O. Smith. The new firm saw Keffer continue in the capacity of principal designer with Jones assuming the practical operations of the partnership. The firm developed a solid reputation in the state eventually receiving commissions for dozens of schools and collegiate buildings. The firm designed twelve major buildings at the Iowa State Fairgrounds between 1920 and 1936 and a number of commissions for the Des Moines School District between 1921 and 1939. Architectural historian Wesley Shank credits their work on schools to their ability to work well with school boards.<sup>24</sup>

The firm developed a similar reputation for their work on county courthouses in the state. Commissions included the O'Brien County Court House (1915-1917) in Primghar, the Ringgold

<sup>23</sup>Insurance Maps of Indianola, Iowa. (New York: The Sanborn and Perris Map Company) 1927 updated to 1945, p.2.

<sup>24</sup>Shank, Wesley I., *Iowa's Historic Architects: A Biographical Dictionary* (Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1999, p. 94.

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County Court House (1926-27) in Mount Ayr, the Louisa County Court House (1926-1927) in Wapello, the Warren County Court House (1938-1939) in Indianola, the Audubon County Court House (1939) in Audubon, and the Des Moines County Court House (1939-1940) in Burlington. According to Shank, the firm's O'Brien County Court House was the first example of a flat-roofed rectangular block form courthouse in the state – a basic form that would be repeated in subsequent design efforts.

Earl Jones, managing partner for the Warren County Court House had several connections to Indianola and Warren County. He attended Simpson College in Indianola in ca.1906 before going on to Washington University and Columbia University. In 1912 he returned to Iowa and married an Indianola woman before going to work for Smith and Keffer in Des Moines. His Indianola connection may have worked in the firm's favor when they were selected to receive the commission for the Indianola High School in 1924.

The three New Deal Era courthouses designed by Keffer and Jones for Warren, Audubon, and Des Moines counties share a number of design attributes including basic form, floor plan, and materials. Each building has a symmetrical façade with a central section (two to four levels) flanked by lower height wings at each end. In each case a central corridor extends the length of the building with vaults in the corners and county offices opening onto the corridor. Common materials include buff colored brick, Bedford limestone, multi-colored terrazzo floors, and acoustic tile. Though the courtroom designs are distinctly different, each originally used dark wood tones and simplified Art Deco ornamentation.

The Warren County Court House was the first of three Keffer & Jones' New Deal Era courthouses, all sharing a similar Moderne Style with simplified Art Deco ornamentation. For the Warren County Court House, a tight budget saw several measures undertaken to keep costs down. Salt glazed tile was used as a wainscoting material rather than marble and no elevator was included in the original plan. Other features such as a pneumatic clock system and telephone wiring were modern improvements that were included.

The role of another designer, Cecil Clair Briggs of New York City, is less documented than that of Keffer and Jones. Briggs is mentioned in a newspaper article<sup>25</sup> as a contributor to the design. Earl Jones indicated a willingness to have Briggs' name associated with the design but thought it appropriate that Briggs at least visit the courthouse site. Briggs was a Rome scholar, architect-artist, and head of the department of architecture at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York.

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<sup>25</sup>"County Board Reserves Right to Reject Any and All Architectural Plans for Courthouse," *The Indianola Tribune*, August 3, 1938

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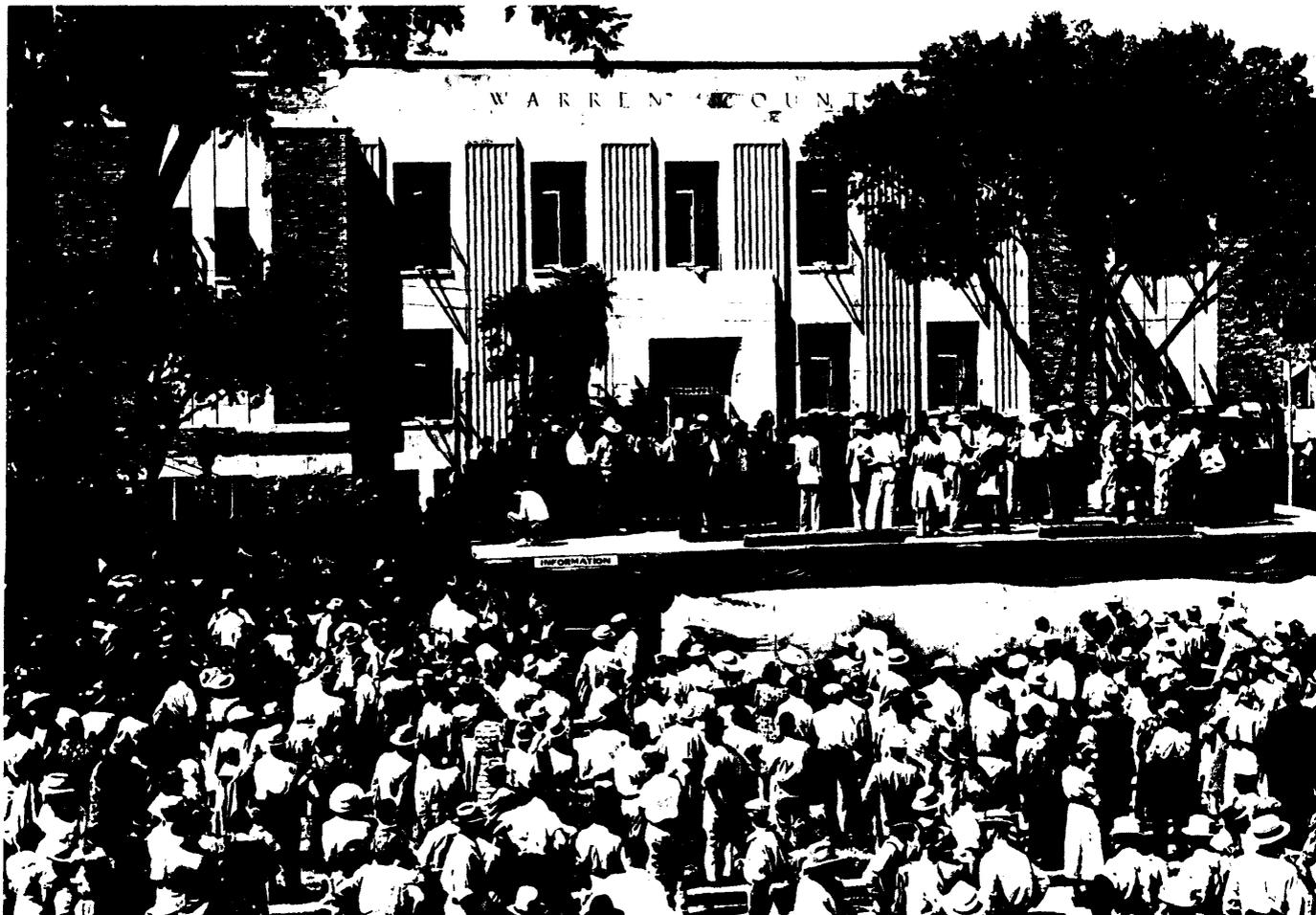
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**Warren County Court House dedication ceremonies, August 24, 1939<sup>26</sup>**



<sup>26</sup>"Warren County Courthouse Dedication, View #9498," WPA Photograph Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa Library, Des Moines, Iowa.

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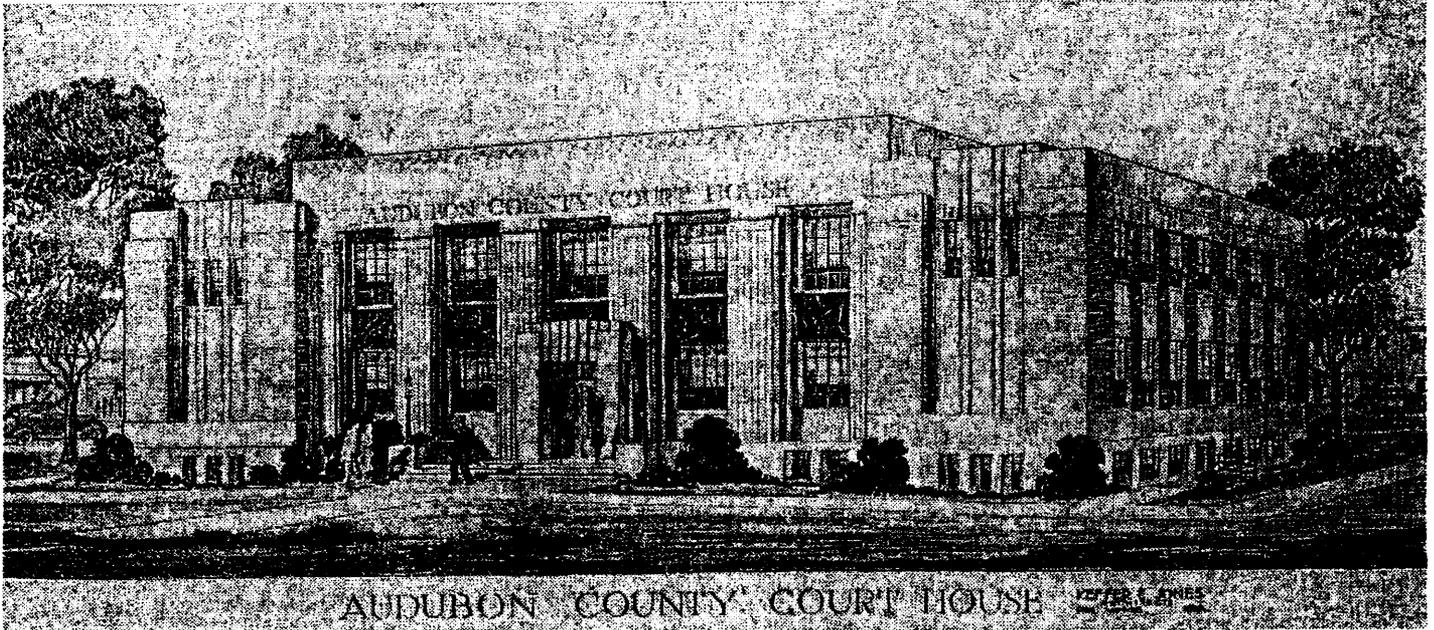
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**Preliminary architectural drawing of proposed Audubon County Court House prepared in 1939 bears a striking resemblance to Warren County Court House design<sup>27</sup>**



**Summary:**

In summary, the Warren 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. Designed by Des Moines architects Karl Keffer and Earl Jones, it is a well-preserved example of the PWA Moderne Style of public building architecture that dominated the 1930s and early 1940s.

**Acknowledgement:**

Preparation of this nomination was funded with the assistance of a matching grant-in-aid from the State Historical Society, Community Programs Bureau through the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, under the provision of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior or the State Historical Society of Iowa, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior or the State Historical Society of Iowa.

<sup>27</sup>"Drawing of New Warren County Court House," *The Advocate-Republican*, March 2, 1939.

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"Vote is Taken on Courthouse by Merchants," no date, 1937.

"Courthouse is Considered by Business Men," April 21, 1937.

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- "No Old Brick in New Courthouse Say Supervisors," undated, 1938.
- "Forestall Move of D.M. Union at New Courthouse," undated, 1938.
- "New Courthouse Ready to Occupy About July 1<sup>st</sup>," undated, 1939.
- "Courthouse Nears Completion but for Equipment," undated, 1939.
- "Aug. 24 set for Dedication, Celebration Courthouse," July 21, 1939.
- "10,000 People Expected for Celebration Thursday, Aug. 24," August 1939.
- "Dedication Program Warren County Courthouse," August 17, 1939.
- "Dr. Jno. O. Gross Speaks at Courthouse Dedication," August 24, 1939.
- "965 Cubic Yards of Concrete in New Courthouse," undated, 1939.
- "Estimated 12,000 to 15,000 People Witness Big Parade," August 30, 1939.
- "First Court Session in New Courthouse," September 1939.

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

Courthouse square, Original Town Plat, City of Indianola, Warren County, Iowa.

**Boundary Justification:**

The boundaries comprise the original site for the Warren County Court House. This site includes the original courthouse square that held the previous county courthouse as well as the present building. The courthouse square is surrounded by West Ashland Avenue on the north, North Howard Street on the east, West Salem Avenue on the south, and North Buxton Avenue on the west.

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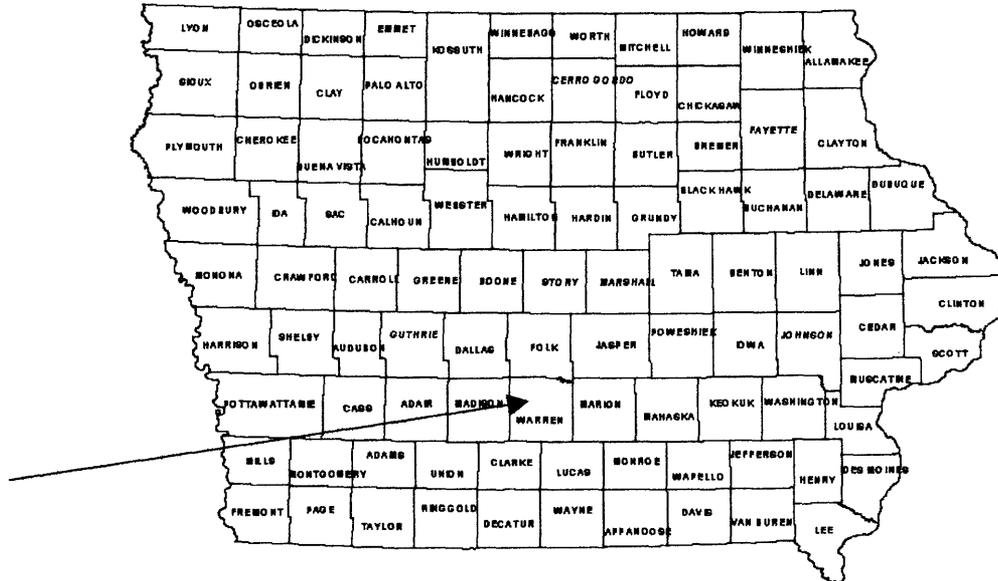
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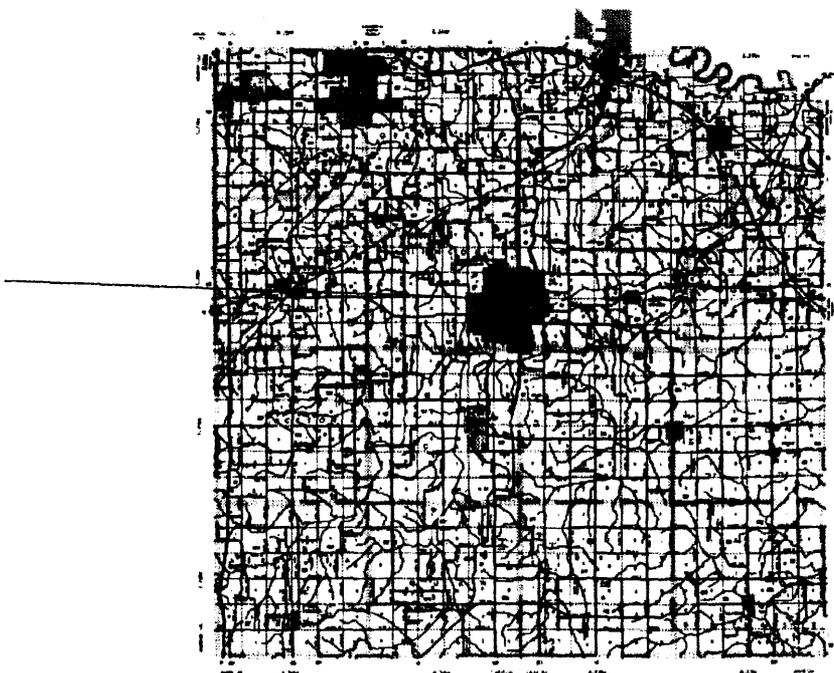
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### Map: Warren County, Iowa



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#### ROADWAY AND BRIDGE MAP WARREN COUNTY IOWA

Issued by  
Iowa Department  
of Transportation  
United States  
Department of Transportation  
JANUARY 1, 1987



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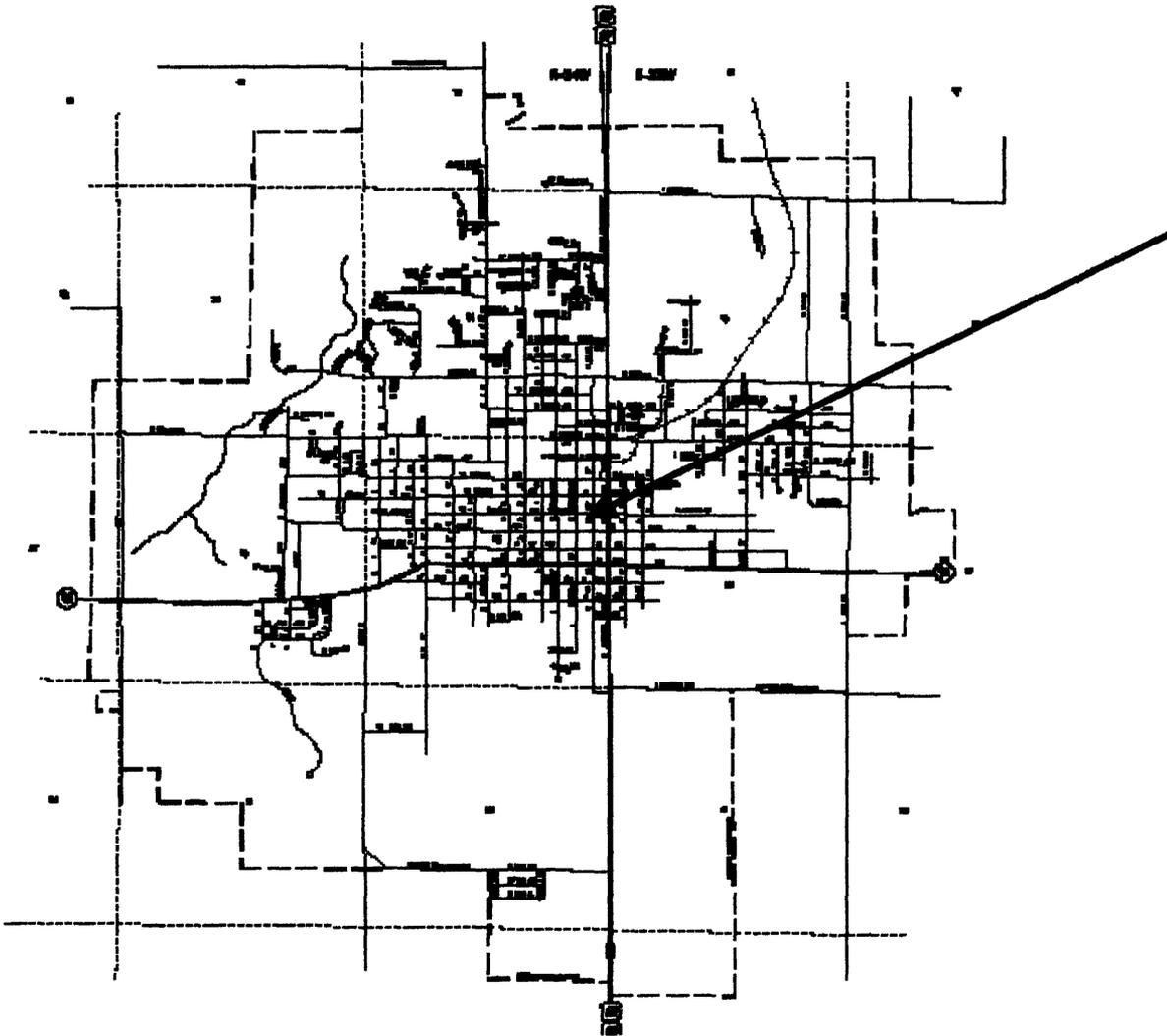
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**INDIANOLA**  
**IOWA**

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
BUREAU OF HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION  
DESIGN OF TRANSPORTATION DATA

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**Photographs**

Bruce Meyer, photographer  
Date taken: October 22, 2002

1. Front & north façades, looking southwest
2. Center section, front façade, looking west
3. Front entrance light detail, looking east, looking southwest
4. North & rear façades, looking southeast
5. Rear and south façades, looking northeast
6. Front entrance vestibule and entrance corridor, looking east
7. Central corridor, second floor, looking south
8. Courtroom, towards front of room, looking north
9. Courtroom, judge's bench, looking northwest
10. Courtroom, jury box, looking northeast
11. Courtroom, towards rear of room, looking south
12. Entrance corridor stairs in new addition, looking east
13. Courthouse site, front and north façades including flagpole, looking southwest