Form No. 10-300 REV. (9/77)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS **TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS** NAME Themalie Resources. HISTORIC County Courthouses in Iowa AND/OR COMMON Ser **2 LOCATION** 17:14 111 STREET & NUMBER multiple; see inventory sheets NOT FOR PUBLICATION CITY, TOWN CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT VICINITY OF STATE COUNTY CODE CODE Iowa CLASSIFICATION CATEGORY **OWNERSHIP** STATUS **PRESENT USE** X PUBLIC _DISTRICT XOCCUPIED X_MUSEUM __AGRICULTURE __BUILDING(S) X_PRIVATE __UNOCCUPIED COMMERCIAL ___PARK __STRUCTURE ___ВОТН X_EDUCATIONAL ___PRIVATE RESIDENCE __SITE PUBLIC ACQUISITION ACCESSIBLE _ENTERTAINMENT -RELIGIOUS XYES: RESTRICTED __OBJECT X_GOVERNMENT _IN PROCESS __SCIENTIFIC Xthematic XYES: UNRESTRICTED ___BEING CONSIDERED _INDUSTRIAL __TRANSPORTATION group _NO __MILITARY ___OTHER: **OWNER OF PROPERTY** NAME Multiple; see inventory sheets STREET & NUMBER CITY, TOWN STATE VICINITY OF LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION COURTHOUSE, to be found in courthouses in the respective counties REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. STREET & NUMBER CITY, TOWN STATE REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS TITLE County Courthouses in Iowa DATE 1977 - 1980___FEDERAL XSTATE ___COUNTY __LOCAL DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Division of Historic Preservation, Iowa City, Iowa

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This thematic group nomination is for 52 county courthouses in Iowa, built between c. 1850 and 1930. Twenty-one Iowa courthouses are already listed in the National Register, either individually or as part of historic districts. There remain 29 additional courthouses, a number of which may eventually be determined eligible, which are at this time less than 50 years of age.

The subjects of this nomination are scattered broadly around the state (See map). They represent architectural styles ranging from the Greek Revival to Art Deco/Moderne, with most examples being from the Romanesque Revival, Neoclassical Revival and Beaux Arts. The integrity of the building varies considerably, particularly with regard to interiors. While most courthouse exteriors have been fairly well preserved, interior spaces have in many cases been reworked and modernized to meet the changing needs for space resulting from the increased complexity and size of county judicial and administrative functions. The best preserved interior public spaces (rotundas, main halls, courtrooms) are found in the Beaux Arts and other classically-derived buildings. They feature a lavish use of marble, brass, ceramic tile, plaster detail and art glass, and are often quite colorful in contrast to their monochrome lime-stone exteriors.

Exterior wall materials are principally limestone, sandstone and brick, used singly or in combination. Sandstone courthouses are generally in the Victorian or Richardsonian Romanesque styles, as are many of the brick courthouses. Limestone, smoothly dressed or rusticated, is the favored exterior cladding for the Beaux Arts, Neoclassical and Renaissance Revival forms.

The courthouses are all quite large, and generally imposing as is befitting a seat of county government. Most are quite prominently sited on large grass-covered squares, adjacent to or at the center of their communities' business districts. The large scale is most noticeable in the smaller towns, where few, if any, other buildings approach the courthouses in size or architectural elaboration.

From the information available, it appears that the vast majority of these courthouses were designed by trained architects, rather than being simply the work of local builders. Architects were selected from around the midwest, including Chicago, Minneapolis, Omaha, and Detroit. Iowa architects are well represented, particularly those from Des Moines.

The period from c. 1890 to 1910 was one of transition in Iowa courthouse design, as revivals of medieval forms flourished and then gave way to Beaux Arts classicism. Within these stylistic categories, architects of Iowa courthouses moved freely, in some cases seriously attempting "high style", but in most cases borrowing freely from among various details popular at the time. Generally speaking, the architects designed nothing avant-garde, instead remaining with the mainstream of popular architectural trends. They also had to stay within the budget: a limited budget was often clearly (See Continuation Sheet



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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Iowa's county courthouses are the physical manifestations of the growth, development and continuing vitality of county government in the state. They achieve local significance both as historical symbols and, in many cases, as important architectural elements within their counties and communities.

- 1. They are almost always visual and architectural focal points in their communities, due to their imposing scale, siting and elaboration of detail.
- 2. Symbolically, they stand as the counties' foremost architectural statements about the importance accruing to the towns in which they are located, in political, social and economic terms.
- 3. They represent significant public investment, not only for functional space, but for meeting the needs of local citizens for appropriate expressions of the "majesty of law."
- 4. While not often great architecture, they are definitely built to last, and are wholly representative of the stylistic enthusiasms of their time.

As Goeldner notes (p.23), the county courthouse has historically served as the "focus of community activity, town planning, patriotic idealism and architectural aspiration" -- all characteristics represented in Iowa's examples. The courthouse square was a feature of many original town plats, certainly of more than the 99 for towns that eventually became county seats. In a number of cases, the community's business district is arranged around the square (for example, Ringgold, Jasper and Muscatine counties), while in others the square is adjacent to the commercial center. Wherever located, the courthouses are monumental structures, and in smaller towns often quite out of scale in relation to their surroundings -- although their visual impact is considerably enhanced thereby.

One of the most notable themes in Iowa's early county settlement history is that of the county seat war. This theme is most graphically illustrated today in counties such as Allamakee, Jackson, Audubon and Clinton, where vestiges of former county seat glory remain in several towns in the form of old courthouses or county jails. Although accounts of struggles over the location of county seats may make amusing reading today, to those most affected at the time the issue was of serious consequence: simply by virtue of being the county seat, a town was reasonably assured of stable economic growth, increased population, prestige, and substantial political power.

(See Continuation Sheet)

9	MAJOR BIBLIOGRA	PHICAL REFERE	NCES	
	-	ounties and Courtho		Mason City IA: Klipto Printing
	Stanek, Edward, and Ja		owa's Magnifi	cent County Courthouses. Des
	Goeldner, Paul Templ	es of Justice Dh	as of fowd.	Chicago: Andreas Atlas Co., 1875. on, Columbia University, 1970.
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

М.Н.	Bowers,	Architectural	. Survey	Coordinator	

ORGANIZATION Division of Historic Preservation	Winter/Spring, 1980		
street & NUMBER	TELEPHONE		
26 East Market St.	319/353-6949		
CITY OR TOWN	state		
IOWA City	Iowa 52240		

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL	STATE	LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. ۸

STATE HIST	ORIC PRESERVATI	ION OFFICER SIGNATI	URE A	<u> </u>	Ander-	4			
TITLE	Director,	Division of	7 Historic	Preserva	7 tion	DATE	5/15	./81	_
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United States Department of the Interior Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet	Item number	6	Page 1

COUNTY COURTHOUSES

IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Allamakee County Courthouse Audubon County Courthouse (K.P. Hall) Benton County Courthouse Clayton County Courthouse Dallas County Courthouse Davis County Courthouse Dubuque County Courthouse Franklin County Courthouse Green County Courthouse Ida County Courthouse Johnson County Courthouse Lee County Courthouse Lyon County Courthouse Madison County Courthouse Marshall County Courthouse Mitchell County Courthouse Polk County Courthouse -Pottawattamie County Courthouse Shelby County Courthouse Sioux County Courthouse Van Buren County Courthouse Woodbury County Courthouse

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

County Courthouses in Iowa



CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

reflected in a lack of detail or ornament. In many other cases, however, it appears that little expense was spared in the creation of a monumental edifice to house county functions.

Of the courthouses included in this nomination, nearly half are the third such buildings to have been built in the counties, with the next largest group being "fourth-generation" courthouses. In reading the various courthouse histories, it appears that courthouse building tended to follow a pattern. The earliest "courthouse" was generally a log structure that often served additional duty as a school or town hall. Once a community was well-established, a second courthouse was built, of masonry construction and in a vernacular Greek Revival, or occasionally Italianate, style. Beginning about 1890, there was a major movement in Iowa counties to build new courthouses, the existing structures having become too small or unfashionable. Of the courthouses under discussion here, eighteen date from 1890-99, eleven from 1900-1910, and five from 1911-1920.

This nomination is the outgrowth of a statewide survey of Iowa courthouses, conducted on an irregular basis over the past several years. The Division has compiled an extensive photographic record of Iowa courthouses, particularly those built before 1930, and in many cases has field notes prepared during the photographic work. At the close of the survey, it was concluded that, due to their heavily symbolic nature, as focal points of county organization and government in a state where this political subdivision retains a pivotal psychological, political and administrative importance, all courthouses over 50 years of age were eligible for the Register as locally significant, architecturally and/or historically, unless their integrity had been seriously compromised.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM



County Courthouses in Iowa

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

The principal factors in county seat location were: geographically central position, a town's population size, economic strength, access to transportation and sheer political influence. In the earliest years of county formation in Iowa, two trends developed. In the first, booming river towns (for example, Dubuque, Davenport, Burlington, Council Bluffs, Sioux City) achieved such swift population and economic growth that a more central location for the county seat was seldom a viable issue. In the second, the question of location was more complex. As counties were established by the state legislature, a first step was the appointment of a commission to select a site for the county seat. A guiding principle was that the seat should be centrally located, to provide equal access from all points in the county. In many cases, a new town was laid out to accomplish this - sometimes because none of the existing towns was suitably located, but, in others (no doubt), because it was easier, politically, to establish a new town than to choose among existing ones.

From that point on, however, other factors came into play, as communities grew to challenge the original county seat through economic development and population growth -- the result being a series of referenda, sometimes over many decades, as first one town and then another sought the substantial benefits of county seat status. A deciding factor in many cases was the coming of the railroad to a town -- by itself a major economic boost.

The structures erected to house county government were thus not only buildings for a utilitarian purposes, but buildings symbolic of community pride, success and aspiration. The courthouses were architectural boasts, proclaiming the importance, real or perceived, of the community. Thus they were necessarily monumental, elaborate, often self-conscious and not a little pretentious. Their importance was further manifest in their often high cost and the fact that they were sometimes one of the few buildings -- or perhaps the only building -- in town designed by professional architects. Grandeur was not limited to the exterior of these courthouses; although the most elaborate interior spaces came with the Beaux Arts and Neoclassical designs of the 20th century, the 19th century courthouses could also boast fine staircases, awesome courtrooms and finely-molded woodwork.

The county courthouses were built to be permanent structures, although changing architectural styles and need for additional or better-arranged space resulted in the loss of many from the mid-19th century, and even late 19th century. Stylistic trends in the nation as a while can be followed with ease using Iowa courthouse examples: the Greek Revival of the 1840's and 1850's; Italianate and Second Empire from the 1860's and 1870's; the move toward medieval revivals, most notably the Romanesque, from the 1880's to turn of the century; the classical revivals of the World War I era blending into Art Deco and Moderne in the 1920's and 1930's, and hanging

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County Courthouses in Iowa

CONTINUATION SHEET	ITEM NUMBER 8	PAGE 3

on, however debased, until the construction of several frankly modern glass curtain-wall courthouses in the 1960's and 1970's. Even the Prairie Style is represented, in the Woodbury County Courthouse, Sioux City (listed in the National Register in 1973).

Within this range, two major stylistic expressions are evident in the courthouses included in this nomination. The first is the Romanesque revival -- either Richardsonian, or, in many cases, what Blumenson (1977) calls "Victorian Romanesque". These buildings are often asymmetrical, with prominent corner towers, complex roofscapes, assorted projecting turrets and bays, entrance porches featuring massive round arches, and round-arched window openings. The most "Richardsonian" have exterior walls faced with rockfaced stone (perhaps the feature most prominently associated in the public mind with that architect), while those described as "Victorian" generally combine brick walls with rockfaced stone ground stories and detailing. A few examples of this latter form are executed wholly in brick, with only minimal use of decorative elements.

The second expression, beginning in the late 1890's and extending well into the 20th century, reflects the renewed interest in classical architecture sparked by the 1893 Chicago World Exposition. Iowa courthouses in this style are strongly symmetrical, generally faced with dressed Bedford limestone, and feature a full array of classical detailing, including columns, pilasters, entablatures and pediments, arranged to reflect, with varying degrees of competence, the Beaux Arts, Neoclassical and Renaissance Revival styles. After World War I, the courthouse exteriors became progressively more simplified, as architects eschewed decorative column and pilaster caps, swags and other detail in favor of a "stripped" form. This later (1920's +) retained the exterior cladding, shape and symmetry of the earlier versions, but was simplified to a series of flat, unadorned vertical elements across the front, a very plain parapet, and perhaps one or two columns for effect. This trend resulted by the 1950's in the construction of plain rectangular boxes, with symmetrical facades and a row of flat, engaged piers across the front to stimulate a colonnade -- a tribute to the tenacious hold of the classical on the public mind where government architecture is at issue.

The quality of architectural expression within the styles varies widely, ranging from excellent to fundamentally inept. The architectural forms of a number of courthouses have been compromised, not only through insensitive modernization but through structural problems. Many are the examples of courthouses built with crux towers too heavy for the structural system below -- suggesting that the builders were more ambitious

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM



County Courthouses in Iowa

than able. Since most builders were local men, this is not surprising: the opportunity to gain experience in monumental construction of the sort required in courthouse erection was extremely limited outside major cities.

Nevertheless, Iowa's county courthouses stand for the most part as "edifices" in the historic sense: the word derives from Latin <u>aedis</u> -- "temple" -- and temples they are, to community pride, prestige, and aspiration.

Name County Courthouses in Iowa T	hematic Resources
State IA	
Nomination	Type of Review Decision
1. Adair County Courthouse	Entered in the National Register Security Byn 7.2.81
2. Allamakee County Courthouse	- Previously listed 4.11.77
3. Appanoose County Courthouse	-National Register _ delane Byer 7-2-81
4. Audubon County Courthouse	- Previously listed 7.26.77
5. Benton County Courthouse	Entered in the
6. Boone County Courthouse ·	-National Register Alleris Byers 7-2-81
7. Calhoun County Courthouse	Entered in the -National Register Aulan Byn 7-2-81
8. Chickasaw County Courthouse	Substantive Review William H. Bracham 7.2.81
9. Clay County Courthouse	Entered in the - National Register Selow Byen 7-28,
10Clayton County Courthouse	- Previously listed 10.8.76
11.Clinton County Courthouse	Entered in the - National Register Kelou Byu 7.2.8/
12.Crawford County Courthouse	Entered in the National Register Sulous Byun 7.281
13.Dallas County Courthouse	- Previously listed 11.26.73
14. Davis County Çourthouse	Previously listed 5.3.74
15. Decatur County Courthouse	Entered in the - National Register Alelous Byus 7.3.81
16. Delaware County Courthouse	Substantive Roview William H. Brasham 7.2.
17. Dickinson County Courthouse	Entered in the National Register Allow Byen 7. 2.8
18. Dubuque County Courthouse	- Previously listed 6.23.71
19. Fayette County Courthouse	Intered in the - National Register Allous Bym 7.2.2
20. Franklin County Courthouse	_ Previously listed 8.13.75
21. Fremont County Courthouse	- Notional Register Selous Byen 7.2.
22. Greene County Courthouse	- Previously listed 12.14.78
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Multiple Resource Area Thematic Group

Name County Courthouses in Iow. State IA	a Thematic Resources
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2. Harrison County Courthouse	- National Register Autous Byen 7.2-81 Fatured in the
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y, Jackson County Courthouse	Entered in the - National Register Aulaun Byun 7.28
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33. Jefferson County Courthouse	Entered in the National Register Allous Byur 7.2.
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💋 Madison County Courthouse	- Previously listed 8.13.76
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12 Marion County Courthouse	Entered in the - National Register Allous Byur 7.2.
🖋 Marshall County Courthouse	_ Previously listed 11.21.72
44 Mitchell County Courthouse	- Previously listed 8.29.77
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Multiple Resource Area Thematic Group

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United States Department of the Interior **National Park Service** For NPS use only **National Register of Historic Places** received **Inventory—Nomination Form** date entered Continuation sheet Item number Page Multiple Resource Area dnr-11 Thematic Group ŕ Name _____ County Courthouses in Iowa Thematic Resources State Iowa Nomination/Type of Review Date/Signature Keeper 1. Old Allamakee County Courthouse Entered in the Maticul: Montates Attest ₩Keeper 2. Ikd Garrusib County Courthouse $[1,\ldots,n] \in \mathbb{R}^{n}$ mtar Factorie - - atomat Attest 3. Keeper Attest 4. Keeper Attest 5. Keeper Attest 6. Keeper Attest 7. Keeper Attest 8. Keeper Attest 9. Keeper Attest 10. Keeper Attest

