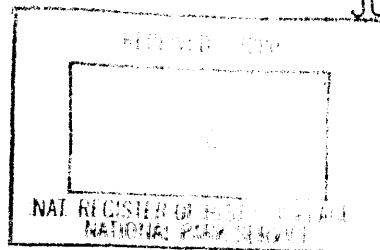


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form



This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

☒ New Submission ☐ Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa, 1934 - 1941

C. Form Prepared by

name/title Marlys A. Svendsen

organization Svendsen Tyler, Inc.

Date January 2003

street & number N3834 Deep Lake Road

telephone (715) 469-3300

city or town Sarona state Wisconsin

zip code 54870

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this **documentation form meets the National Register** documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional **requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.** (☐ see continuation sheet for additional comments).

Rowell J. Sorce July 10, 2003
Signature and title of certifying official Date

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Gordon R. Beall 8/28/03
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

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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 Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts

i. Introduction

In 1980 the State Historical Society of Iowa completed a thematic resource nomination for 52 county courthouses in Iowa, built between c. 1850 and 1930. Of this group, 21 courthouses had already been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. According to that nomination, this group included buildings representing architectural styles ranging from Greek Revival to Art Deco/Moderne with most examples from the Romanesque Revival, Neoclassical Revival, and Beau Arts. These buildings were widely distributed across Iowa's 99 counties.

In the summer of 2001 the State Historical Society of Iowa retained a consultant to survey and evaluate eleven courthouses built between 1934 and 1952 to determine their eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. Marlys Svendsen with Svendsen Tyler, Inc. of Sarona, Wisconsin was hired to complete the survey, prepare an amendment to the previous multiple property nomination or complete a new multiple property documentation form based on a historic context appropriate to the properties surveyed and determined eligible. Individual nominations would then be prepared for eligible courthouses. Photographer Bruce Meyer of Sioux City, Iowa would complete photographic documentation.

During the course of the survey, the decision was made to limit the courthouse cover document to those buildings built with federal funding assistance during the New Deal period and one building for which funding was applied but no assistance received. This included ten courthouses built between 1934 and 1941 scattered across Iowa. Historical documentation was also collected for the courthouse erected in Creston in Union County that was erected in 1952, but it was excluded from National Register consideration due to integrity issues and the lack of an historical link with the other ten courthouses.

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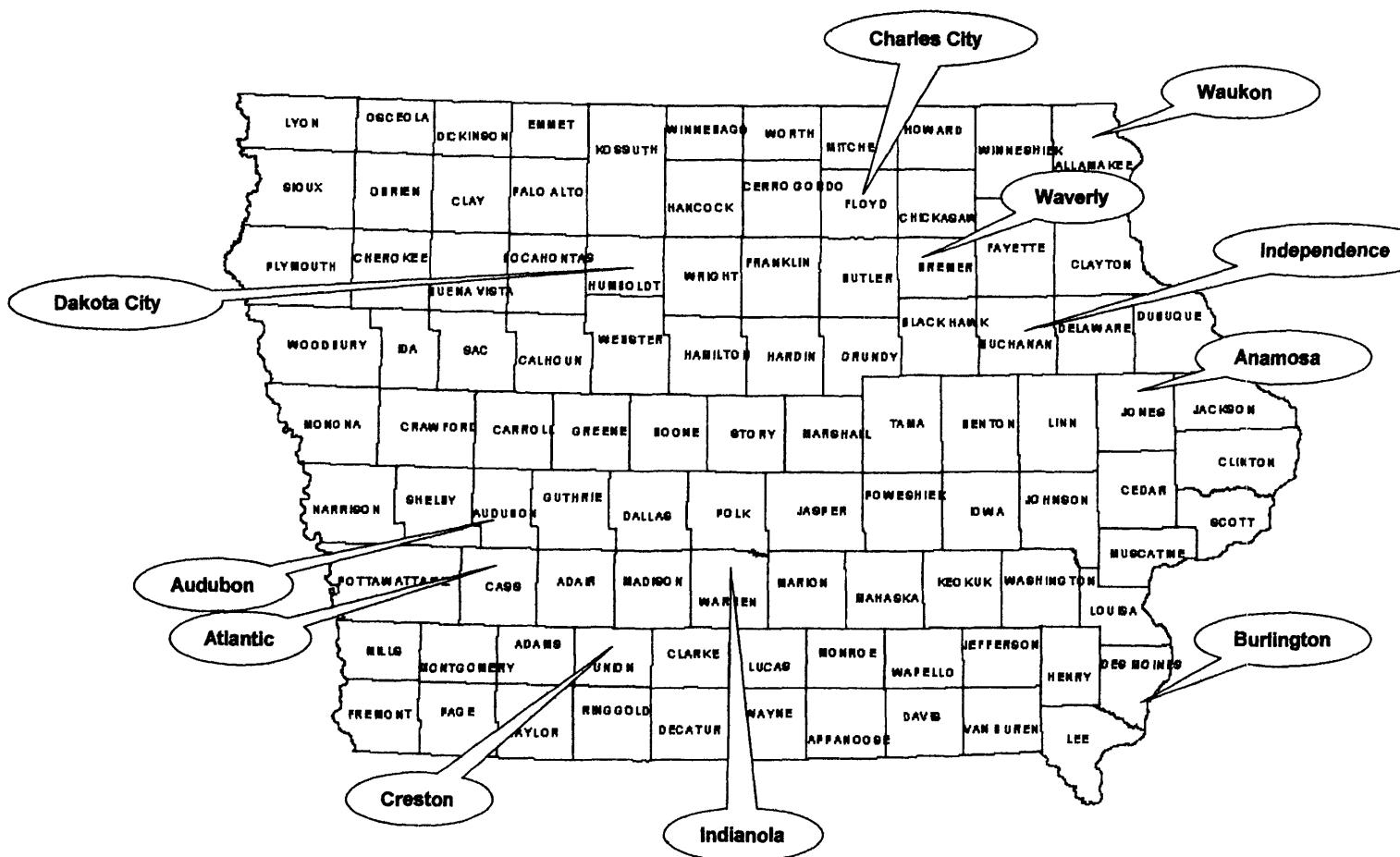
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The map below shows the eleven counties containing courthouses that were documented and evaluated for the courthouse study.

Figure 1: Map of Iowa showing eleven counties with courthouses evaluated for National Register eligibility



ii. Description and Overview PWA-Era Courthouses in Iowa

Ten courthouses were built in Iowa between 1934 and 1941, nine receiving grants to support their construction from the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, more commonly referred to as the Public Works Administration (PWA). These courthouses were distributed across the state

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geographically. Courthouses were built in prominent locations in public squares or facing parks (4), adjacent to central business districts (4), or on elevated sites overlooking important thoroughfares or rivers (8). In a number of instances courthouses were built on sites surrounded by other public buildings including the grounds of a state penitentiary, a school, and many churches.

The ten courthouses included in this historic context were completed between 1934 and 1941. The buildings were all variations of the architectural style that came to be associated with federally funded public buildings from the New Deal years known as "PWA Moderne." These buildings were described by their promoters as modern, efficient office buildings designed to make county government operate effectively. In each case the building was arranged within a rectilinear plan, two to four-stories in height, with primary entrances accessing a central corridor that extended the length of the building. The courthouses were constructed of brick and stone, trimmed in bronze and aluminum, and in every case, featured handsomely appointed courtrooms. Nearly all of the buildings featured Art Deco designs in the stone patternwork, lighting fixtures, and window grillwork. The internal plans for the ten PWA-Era courthouses shared many of the same features as well. These included a central main block with subsidiary wings, a central corridor plan, location of the main public offices and storage vaults on the first floor, location of the district courtroom on the second floor with a ceiling that extended into the third floor, and location of the jail and sheriff's residence on the top floor. The significance of this internal organization is discussed in greater detail on page E-28.

All ten buildings were designed by Iowa architectural firms and most were built under the oversight of Iowa general contractors and sub-contractors. The two architectural firms responsible for seven buildings, Dougher, Rich & Woodburn and Keffer & Jones, were headquartered in Des Moines while the other three firms were located with greater proximity to the county courthouses involved. One general contractor, C. C. Larsen & Sons of Council Bluffs, was responsible for three of the ten courthouses with firms from throughout Iowa and Minnesota responsible for the balance. The architects appear to have borrowed from their own designs as well as those of other PWA-Era

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architects. Buildings constructed during the same era in North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Wisconsin share a similar basic floor plan, central pavilion front façade, and decorative pallet.

iii. The New Deal Era and the Public Works Administration at the National Level

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.¹ He appointed his good friend Harry Hopkins to head the newly established Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and Civil Works 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

¹Arthur 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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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.²

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 led 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

²Jack F. Isakoff, "The Public Works Administration," *University of Illinois Bulletin*, Volume XXXVI, (November

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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 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 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.³

In the end, Congress prevailed seeking to increase the ranks of the employed by speeding up spending on PWA projects. This was done by setting an aggressive timetable for completion of projects.

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

18, 1938), p. 36.

³Lisa 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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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 were 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.

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

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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.

iv. 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.⁴ 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

⁴P.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.⁵

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. When the second referendum was held a 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

⁵*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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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
- 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 valuation⁶

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.⁷

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 supervisors a building concept and design to promote during the referendum process. If a grant was awarded and a county's voters

⁶"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.

⁷"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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approved, the architect who supported the local efforts usually received 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 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."⁸ 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

⁸"Women's Clubs Talk Building a Courthouse," *Indianola Record*, July, 1936.

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contacted Cass County's auditor who happily shared a copy of the information pamphlet.⁹

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."¹⁰ 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.¹¹

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

⁹"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.

¹⁰"PWA Grant for Court House is Asked by Board," *The Advocate-Republican*, August 4, 1938.

¹¹"County Board Reserves Right to Reject Any and All Architectural Plans for Courthouse," *Indianola Tribune*, August 3, 1938.

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county's old settlers 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 followed by capsule summaries of each of the projects, also listed in chronological order. 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 ¹²
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	\$119,000
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

¹²Original 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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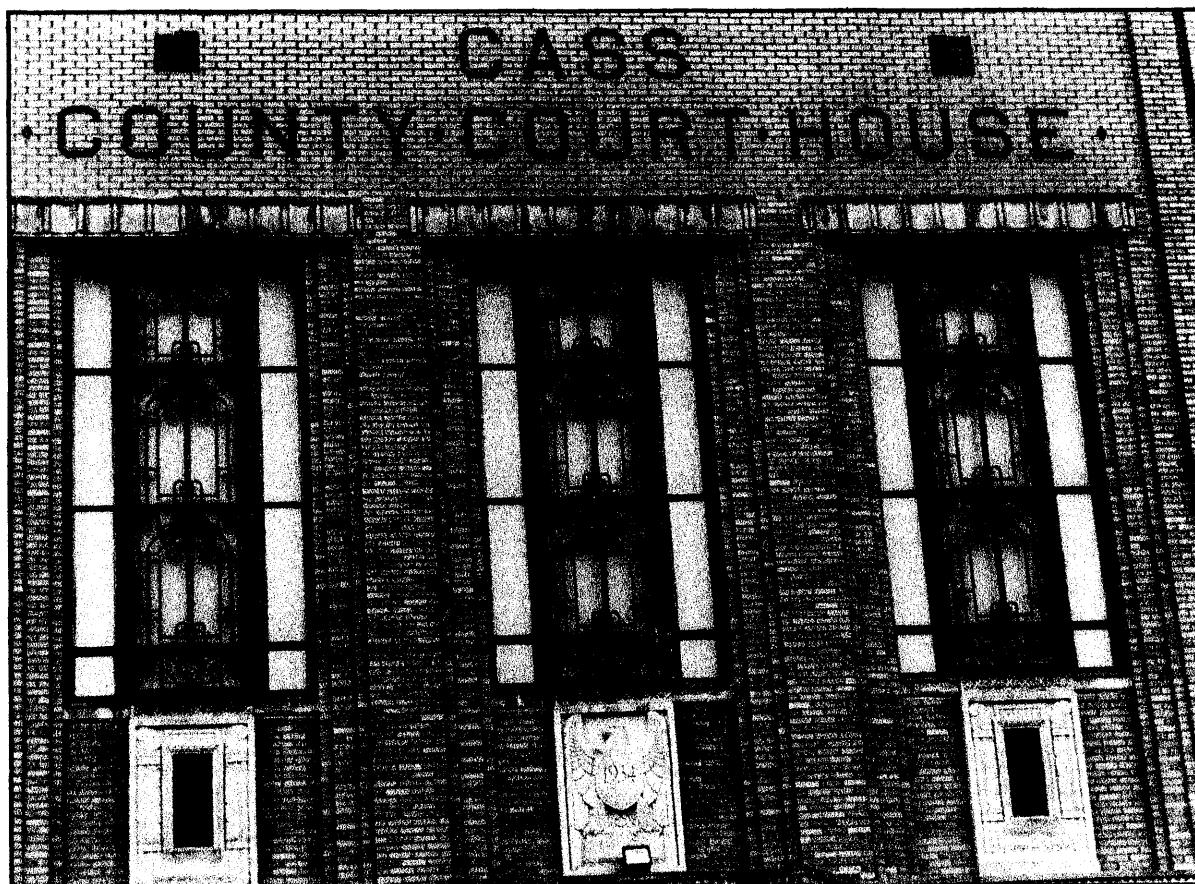
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Cass County: The Cass County Court House in Atlantic was the county's third courthouse. The move to erect a new courthouse came in 1932 following a fire that destroyed the 1882 courthouse. With the county facing a serious economic depression, the first courthouse referendum failed at the general election in November 1932. The following year when Roosevelt's PWA was introduced, Cass County was the first county to apply and receive a federal grant. The second referendum passed in 1933 and architects Dougher, Rich & Woodburn of Des Moines were retained. Construction began in December and the cornerstone was laid amidst great fanfare in March 1934. Steady progress saw the building completed before year's end. The building was formally dedicated the day after Christmas with Governor Clyde L. Herring on hand as the feature speaker.

Cass County Court House, Atlantic



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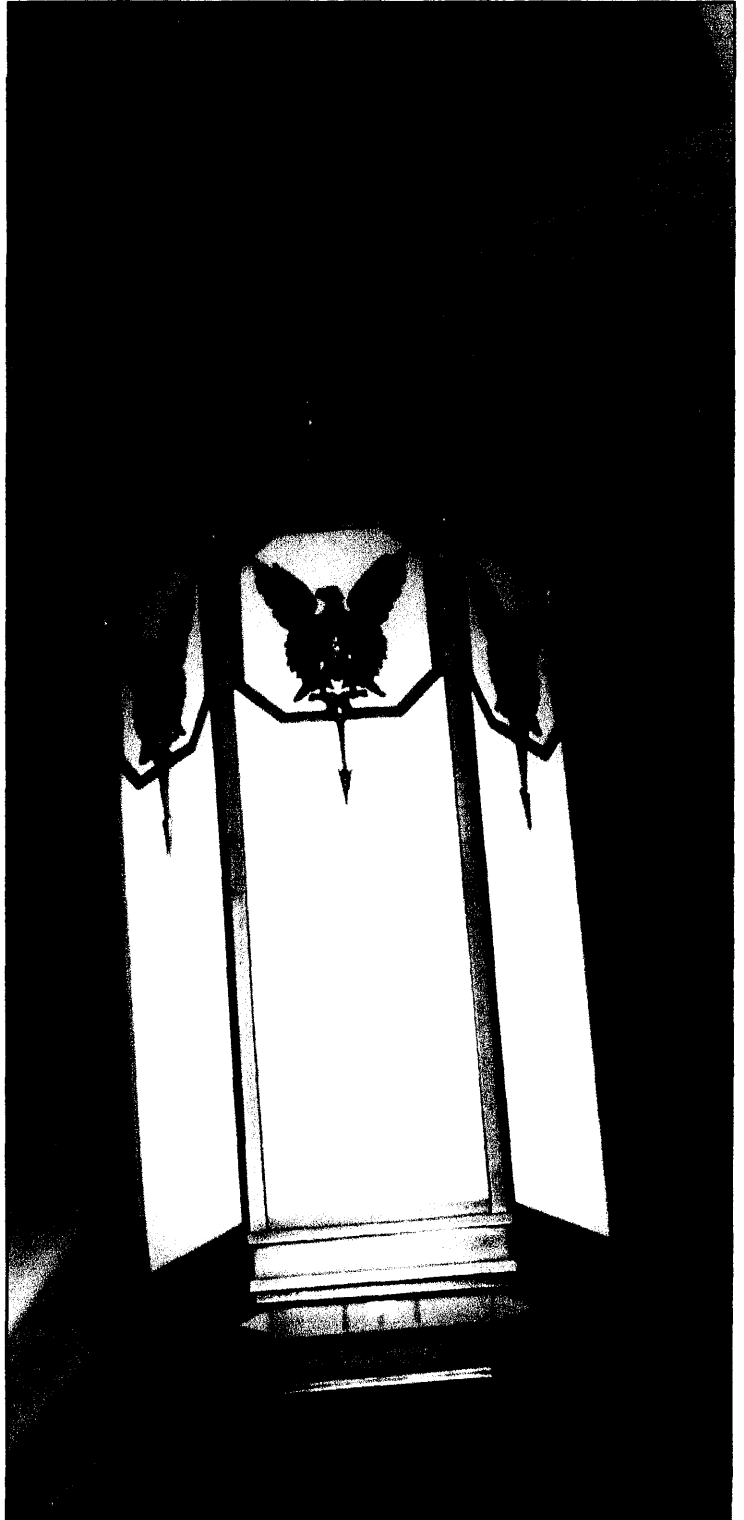
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Iowa
State

Bremer County: The Bremer County Court House in Waverly was the county's fourth courthouse erected in 1936-37.

Discussions about constructing a new courthouse had surfaced periodically during the 1920s and early 1930s as the county's 1857 courthouse proved too small. After PWA funds were applied for in 1935, the county was informed that its request of \$60,750 was funded. Architect Mortimer Cleveland of Waterloo was retained to design the new courthouse. A brief debate ensued regarding moving the courthouse to Tripoli in eastern Bremer County but was soon tabled. In March 1936 voters approved the necessary referendum to fund the balance of the new structure. Construction began in April with considerable difficulty encountered with site preparation. The building progressed through summer and by October the exterior brick and stone work was completed. Windows were installed by the end of the year allowing interior marble, plaster, flooring, and painting to continue in the new year. By early summer construction was completed. On June 6, 1937 a dedication ceremony was held with



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1,500 people in attendance. Iowa Supreme Court Justice Richard Mitchell and State PWA Director P.F. Hopkins were the featured speakers.

Bremer County Court House, Waverly



Jones County: The Jones County Court House in Anamosa was the second courthouse officially built for the county. Until the new courthouse was completed in 1937, county offices had been scattered in several leased buildings in downtown Anamosa. A move to erect a new courthouse had failed in 1920 but the availability of funding through the PWA prompted the board of supervisors to make a grant application and put the issue before voters in the summer of 1935. Despite the fact that the state was in the midst of a serious economic depression, the referendum was approved by 77 percent of voters on September 10, 1935. Architects Dougher, Rich & Woodburn of Des Moines were asked to complete the design for the new building. By December the project received final PWA approval and excavation was underway. Construction proceeded steadily but slowly with the

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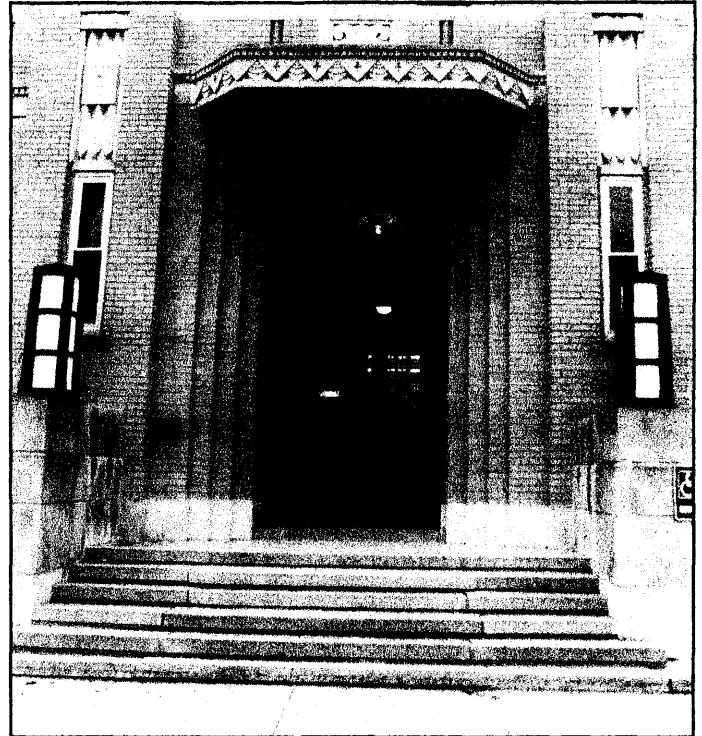
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PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa, 1934-1941
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Iowa
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cornerstone laid at ceremonies August 9, 1936.

Several contract delays and cost overruns for equipment further delayed completion until the following summer. County offices were moved the end of August and dedication ceremonies were set for September 10, 1937. Schools and businesses closed in the county for the day to allow all to attend the dedication ceremony. Nearly 6,000 people were on hand to hear Governor Nelson G. Kraschel deliver the feature address. Other guest speakers included State PWA Director P.F. Hopkins and State Supreme Court Justice J.M. Parsons, a native of Jones County.



Jones County Court House, Anamosa



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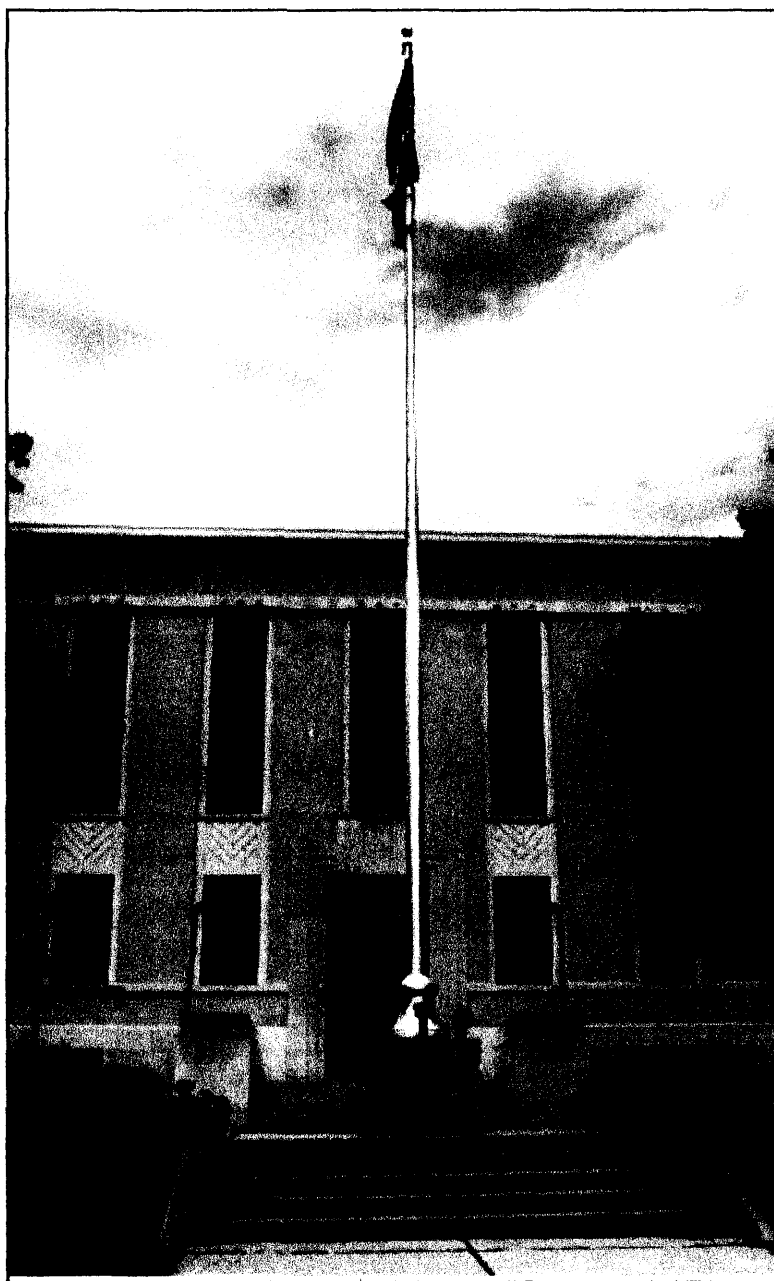
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PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa, 1934-1941
Name of Multiple Property Listing

Iowa
State

Humboldt County: The Humboldt County Court House in Dakota City was located in Iowa's smallest county seat community with less than a population of 500 at the time it was completed in 1939. An earlier move to build a new courthouse in 1923 had been soundly defeated when voters suspected plans by the supervisors to erect a new building also entailed moving the county seat to

nearby Humboldt. Plans for the county's second courthouse, along with a commitment to keep it in Dakota City, were finally approved in November 1936. Architects Dougher, Rich & Woodburn of Des Moines were retained to finalize designs for the building, and an application for a PWA grant to assist with funding was filed a short time later. Approval did not come until the following year, however, when a new federal appropriation was in hand. By late 1937 with the PWA grant approved and architectural planning completed, contracts for construction were ready to be let. Building proceeded steadily through 1938 with the cornerstone laid at ceremonies on April 30, 1938. Ten months later on February 25, 1939 the new building was formally dedicated during an open house and ceremony held in the new courtroom. Iowa Supreme Court Justice Richard Mitchell presented the dedication address and an overflow crowd attended the open house.

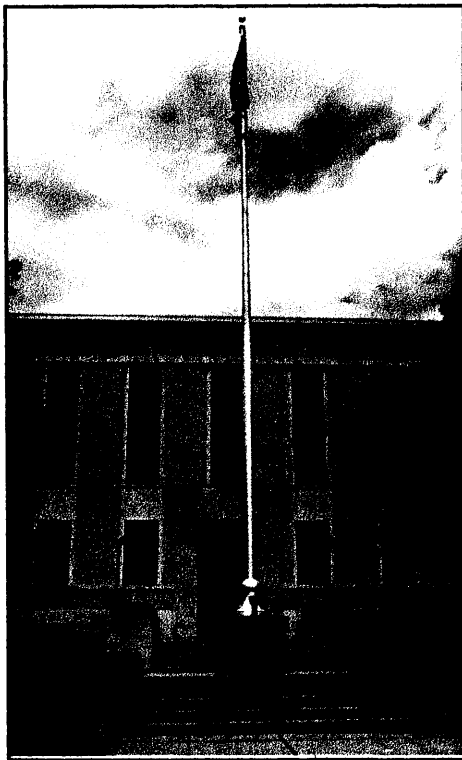


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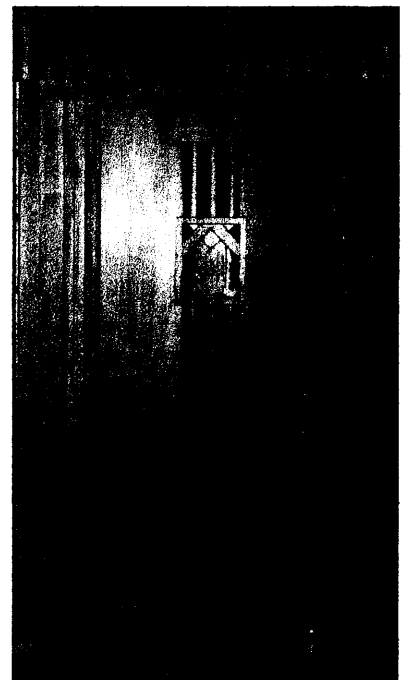
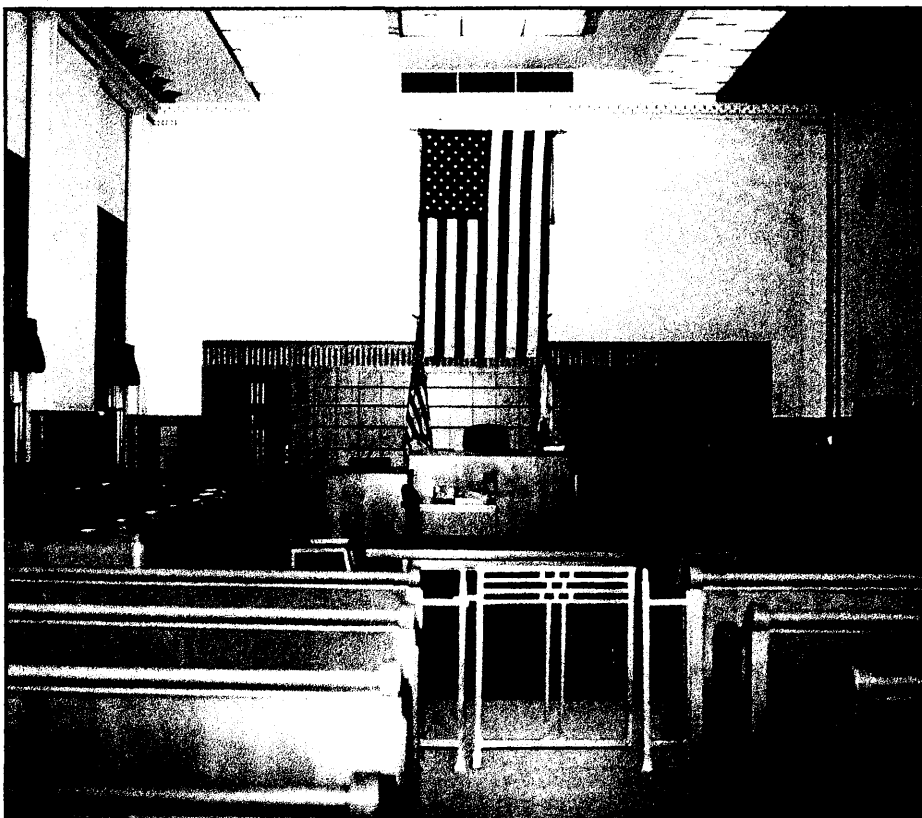
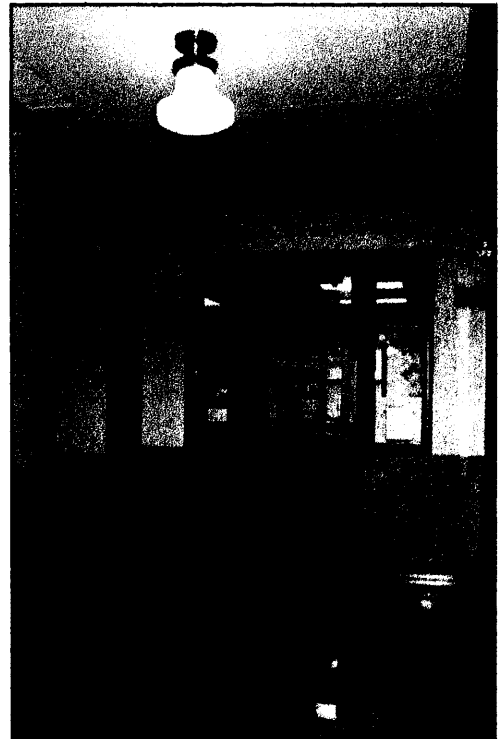
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**Humboldt County
Court House, Dakota
City (1939)**

Main entrance (left);
Central corridor, first
floor, (right); District
courtroom (below, left);
Door behind judge's
bench (below, right);
eagle over entrance,
(below, center)



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State

Warren County: The Warren County Court House in Indianola was the county's third courthouse erected in 1938-1939. The first referendum to build a new courthouse was held in 1936 following discovery of structural problems in the 1868 building located on the town square. The referendum failed despite approval by the PWA of a grant to assist with the construction. Two years later in 1938 when approval of federal funds was offered by the PWA, a second referendum was scheduled. Voters approved the measure this time, and native Indianola resident Earl Jones of the Des Moines architectural firm Keffer & Jones was retained to design the structure. Construction began the following October. Despite labor controversies, construction proceeded and by December 3, 1938 the cornerstone was set. Construction continued through the winter and spring with only minor problems. A dedication celebration was scheduled for August 24, 1939. The daylong event drew more than 12,000 people to view the parade, tour the courthouse, participate in sporting competitions, hear concerts, and join the street dance. John Gross, president of Simpson College in Indianola, delivered the feature address at the dedication ceremony.

Warren County Court House, Indianola (1939)



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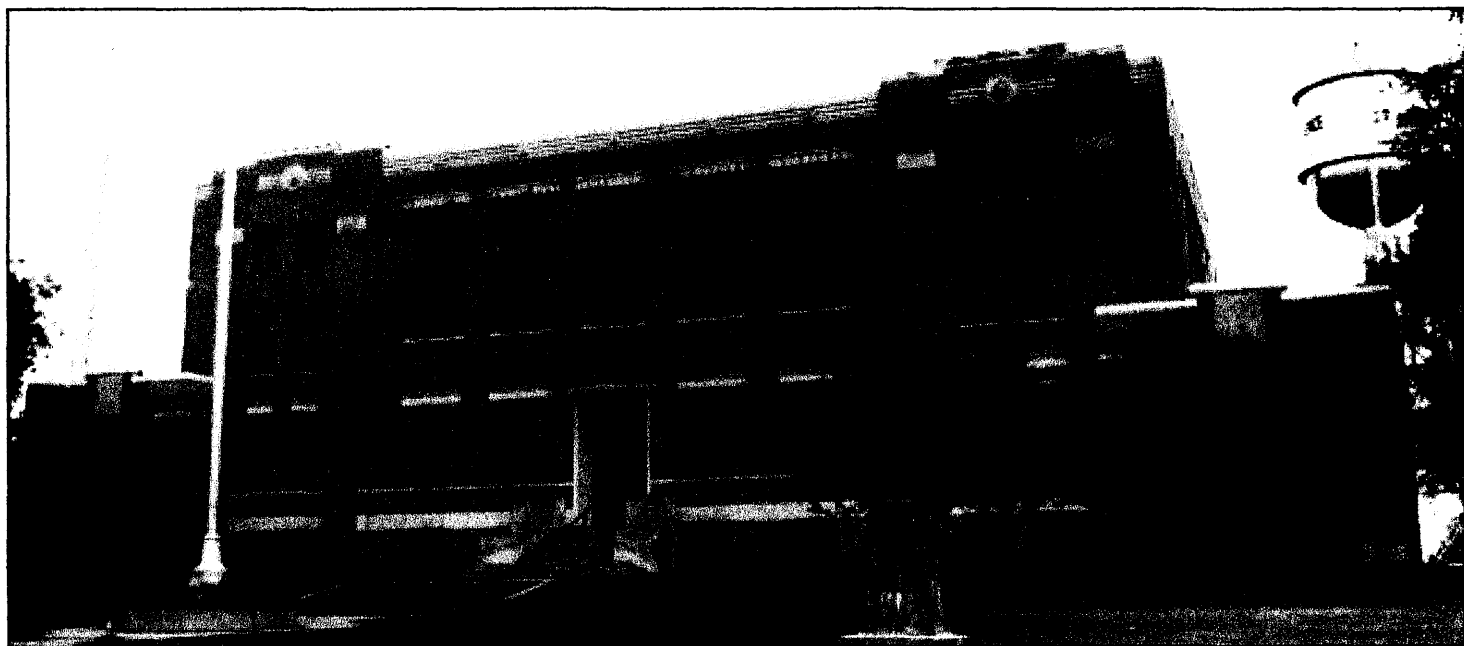
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Iowa
State

Buchanan County: The Buchanan County Court House in Independence erected in 1939-1940 was the third built for the county replacing the earlier courthouse constructed in 1881. Architects Dougher, Rich & Woodburn of Des Moines were retained to design the new building. Availability of funding through the PWA prompted the board of supervisors to make a grant application in 1938 and voters approved bonding for the balance of the project on June 6, 1938. Five houses were acquired and removed from the expanded courthouse square during the summer and November 15, 1938 the official groundbreaking took place. Despite weather delays during the winter months, construction on all phases of the project continued mostly on schedule through 1939. The cornerstone was not laid until September 20, 1939. On March 22, 1940 the board of supervisors accepted the completed building from the contractors. On May 22, 1940 the building was officially dedicated in ceremonies where Rear Admiral Harry Yarnell, U.S.N., retired was the guest speaker. Nearly 4,000 people were on hand for the parade and address.

Buchanan County Court House, Independence (1940)



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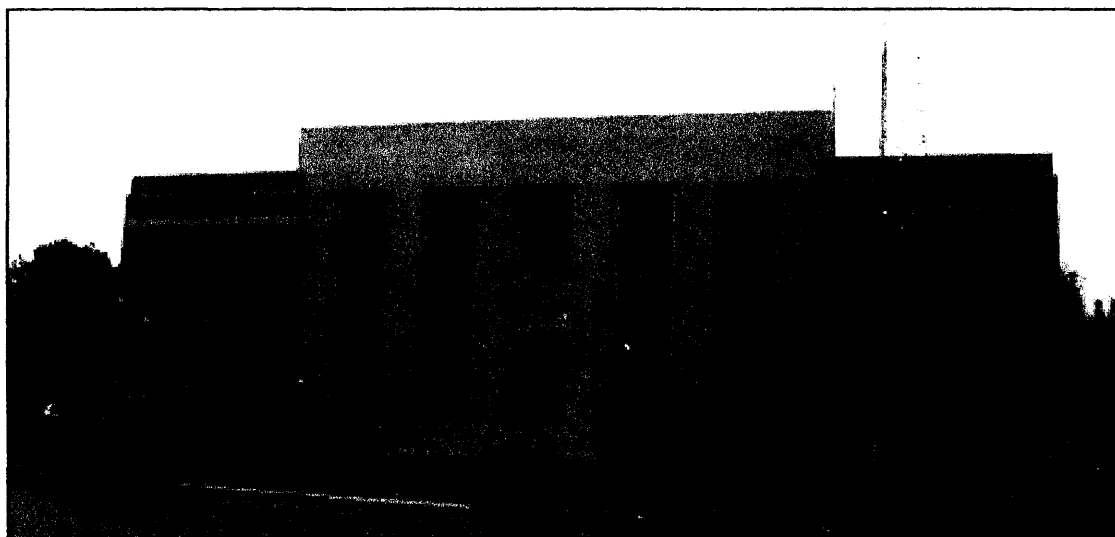
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Iowa
State

Audubon County: The Audubon County Court House erected in Audubon in 1938-1939 was the county's third courthouse built in its fourth county seat. The move to erect a new courthouse came in July 1938 when a citizens group suggested that the board of supervisors apply for funding through the PWA. The grant was approved in August and the following month, the courthouse referendum passed by a wide margin. Architects Keffer & Jones of Des Moines were retained to

Audubon County Court House, Audubon



complete drawings for the building. Groundbreaking took place in November with construction contracts awarded in December. Bids came in well below estimate and the bonds were sold with interest rates lower than expected. As a result, the board of supervisors was able to amend their PWA grant to include the cost of installation of the jail in the new building. Construction on the building proceeded at a steady pace through the balance of the year. On February 15, 1940 use of the courtroom officially began and county offices were occupied a short time later. The courthouse's dedication ceremony was delayed until weather allowed a more fitting celebration on June 11, 1940. Hundreds attended a full day of ceremonies with a parade, band concerts, baseball games, and a county historical pageant. Dr. Thomas Niven of the First Presbyterian Church in Omaha gave the keynote address.

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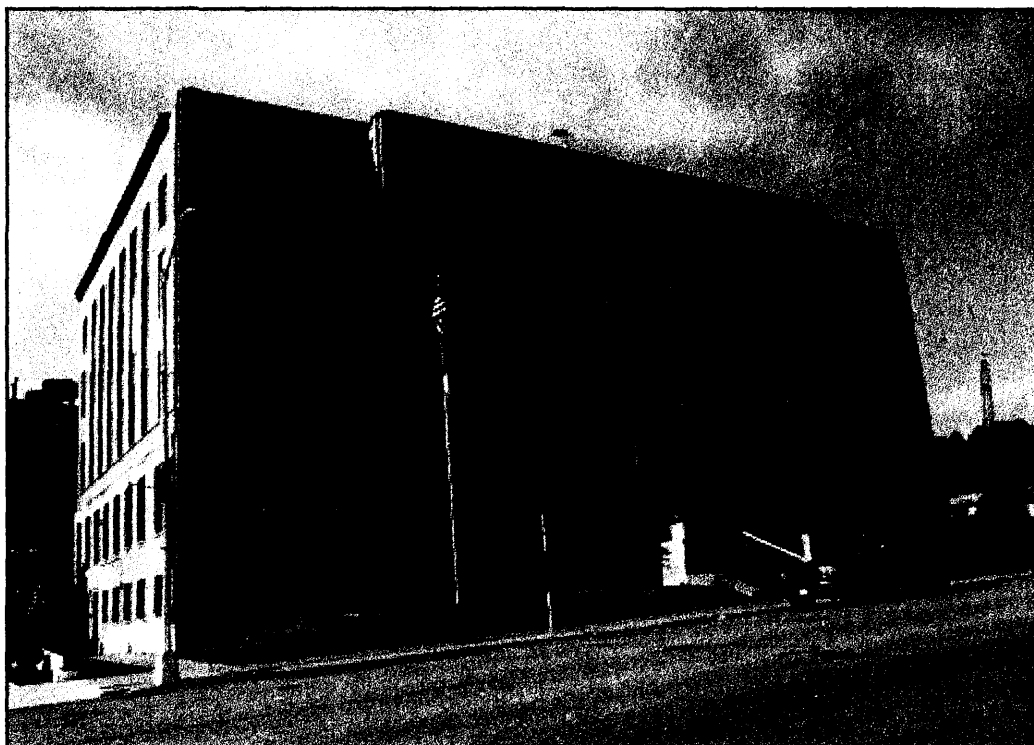
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State

Des Moines County: The Des Moines County Court House erected in Burlington in 1938-1940 was the fourth building used by the county as a courthouse. The move to erect a new courthouse came in August 1938 when the board of supervisors applied for and received a PWA grant to assist with funding. A referendum to consider bonding for the balance of the financing was approved by Des Moines County voters the following month. Architects Keffer & Jones of Des Moines were retained to complete drawings for the building. Bids were received in February 1939 and construction began a short time later. Work proceeded slowly from the start due to soil conditions, shortages of certain skilled workers, and miscellaneous labor problems. Several contract extensions pushed completion into early 1940. In April 1940 with work nearly finished, workers moved into their new quarters. Iowa Supreme Court Justice Oscar Hale dedicated the courtroom on April 6, 1940 with a larger celebration deferred as the attention of local residents turned to war.

Des Moines County Court House, Burlington



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Allamakee County: There were ten county seat ballots in Allamakee County in the years leading up to the Civil War with the location eventually settled by the Iowa Supreme Court in 1867 as Waukon. The Allamakee County Court House erected in Waukon in 1939-1940 replaced an earlier courthouse built across the street in 1859-1861. The move to erect a new courthouse came in 1938 when the board of supervisors applied for and received a PWA grant to underwrite 45 percent of the cost. On September 22, 1938 voters approved a referendum authorizing up to \$105,000 in bonds to be sold. Architect Charles Altfillisch of Decorah was retained to complete drawings for the building and bids were let in March 1939. When the Allamakee County Court House was completed in 1941 it would be the last PWA funded courthouse erected in Iowa.

Allamakee County Court House, Waukon (1941)



Floyd County: The Floyd County Court House in Charles City was the county's third courthouse. The first move to erect a new courthouse came in 1938 when voters were asked to approve a referendum allowing for the sale of \$110,000 in bonds. It was proposed that this sum would be matched by a PWA grant of \$90,000. Architects Hansen & Waggoner of Mason City were retained to design the new building and a public campaign for a PWA-funded courthouse featured their

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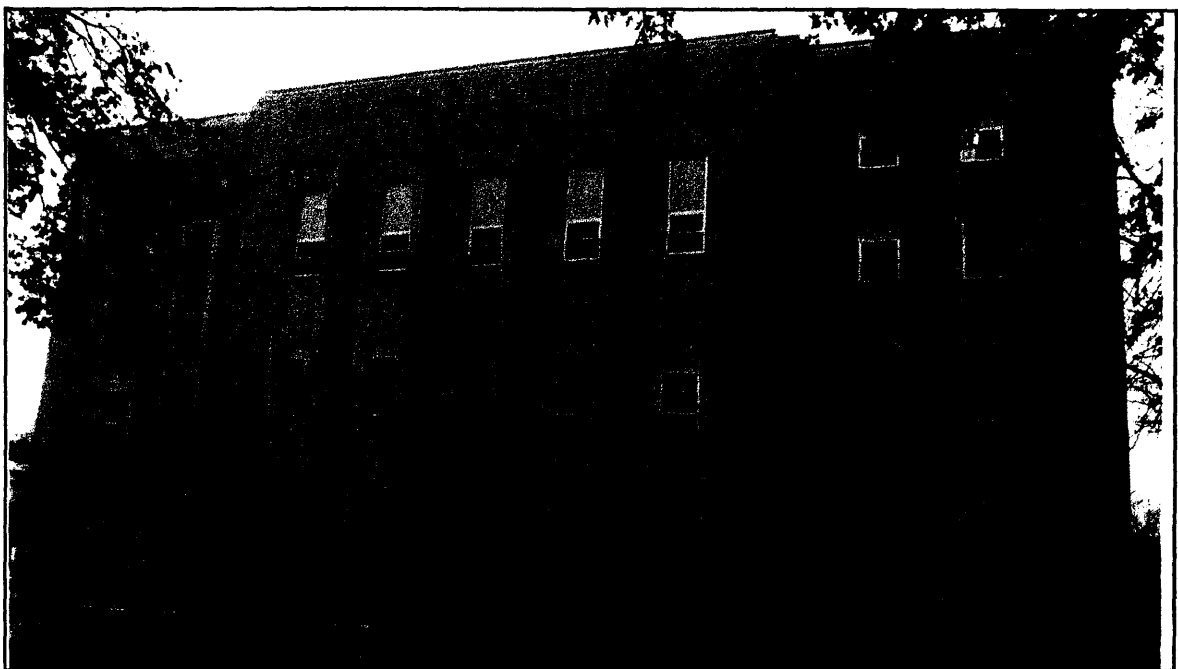
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design sketch. The referendum passed in the special election on September 23, 1938 but PWA funding was not approved. The following year, the 1881 building described at the time as a "fire trap," was condemned and emergency measures were necessary. On March 25, 1940 a second referendum to build a new courthouse without benefit of a PWA grant was approved by voters. Because there would be no PWA funding, the referendum had a price tag more than double the cost of the previous one. On a close vote in April 1940, the board of supervisors authorized construction of the new building based on Hansen & Waggoner's design at the same site as the old courthouse. Ground was broken on August 15, 1940, and the cornerstone was laid the following October 19, 1940 following a parade from the downtown to the courthouse square by local bands. Steady progress saw the building completed and furnished in less than twelve months. The building was formally dedicated on October 10, 1941 with Governor George Wilson on hand as the main speaker. In the years that followed Floyd County residents took great pride in the fact that their \$265,000 courthouse though begun as a PWA project, ended up being funded exclusively by county taxpayers.

Floyd County Court House, Charles City (1941)



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By the time the PWA drew to a close in Iowa, nine county courthouses had been erected using federal grants from this program. Design work and a referendum had been approved for a tenth courthouse, but federal funding had run out. At least three more Iowa courthouses were in the planning stage with applications in various states of completion. Approximately \$25 million was spent on a wide range of PWA projects in the state with more than 14 million man-hours worked. Courthouse projects were to be among the projects that taxpayers found the greatest pride in. Of the ten buildings erected during this period, all remain in use sixty years later.

v. *PWA Moderne*

As has been noted previously, the primary goals of the PWA were social rather than aesthetic with the emphasis put on alleviating unemployment, producing useful public buildings and projects that would serve the communities in which they were built, and at the same time, stimulating the private construction industry. In evaluating the impact of the PWA, it is not surprising that the account prepared for President Roosevelt by authors C.W. Short and R. Stanley-Brown of the Public Works Administration gave scant discussion to the issues of design. Writing on behalf of the PWA, the authors summarized the program's efforts in this regard as follows:

The best designs of public buildings that have been produced in the past 6 years indicates definite efforts to provide structures to fit our present civilization rather than to make our civilization fit into buildings that were designed for other ages.¹³

Meanwhile, critics of the "modern" or "modernistic" designs frequently found in PWA-Era projects, lamented the fact that a new style had not been established during the period. After all, they wrote the PWA had funded 17,000 non-federal projects valued at over \$4 billion including at least 9,500 buildings.¹⁴ The least that could have been accomplished was the founding of a new national design movement.

¹³C.W. Short and R. Stanley-Brown, *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* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), 1939, p. III.

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The passage of time has left some architectural critics more favorably inclined in evaluating the design efforts of architects of PWA-Era buildings. The federal buildings favored the continued use of Classical Revival designs in the dozens of major office buildings erected in Washington, D.C. The U.S. Supreme Court Building completed in 1935 was among the best examples of a PWA funded building employing this style.

The “modernistic” designs more frequently chosen for the non-federal buildings funded through the PWA have come to be known as “Depression Modern”¹⁵ or “PWA Moderne.”¹⁶ This style described by one author as “scraped Classical with Art Deco touches”¹⁷ was lamented by contemporary critics for its boxy forms and dismal pallet of materials. Later authors would offer more charitable reviews celebrating the streamlined nature of many buildings and recognizing use of bronze, marble, and Bedford stone as long-lived, quality materials. The integration of Art Deco and Moderne designs in cut stone, interior and exterior light fixtures, plaster ornamentation, courtroom millwork, and signage allowed the PWA Moderne buildings to be statements of their time.

A representative example of a front elevation for PWA Moderne Style county courthouse appears below. The Jones County Court House incorporates the essential features of a visually dominant central section with subsidiary wings that are found in seven of the ten PWA-Era courthouses in Iowa. It has a stepped parapet on the wings and carved stonework along the cornice, above the windows, and setting off the entrance. The use of Art Deco or Moderne style motifs in the metal grillwork of windows and transoms was typical of most of the PWA-Era courthouses. The use of applied bronze lettering was also found in nearly all of the courthouses. The earlier buildings completed in the state tended to include ornament that stylistically favored the Art Deco while later buildings were more Moderne in their streamlined massing and simpler ornamentation.

¹⁴Reitzes, Volume II, p. 437.

¹⁵Martin Grief, *Depression Modern: the Thirties Style in America*, (New York: Universe Books), 1975, p. 113.

¹⁶David Gebhard, *The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.), 1996 and David Gebhard and Gerald Mansheim, *Buildings of Iowa*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 1993.

¹⁷Richard Pare, editor, *Courthouse A Photographic Document*, (New York: Horizon Press), 1978, p. 244.

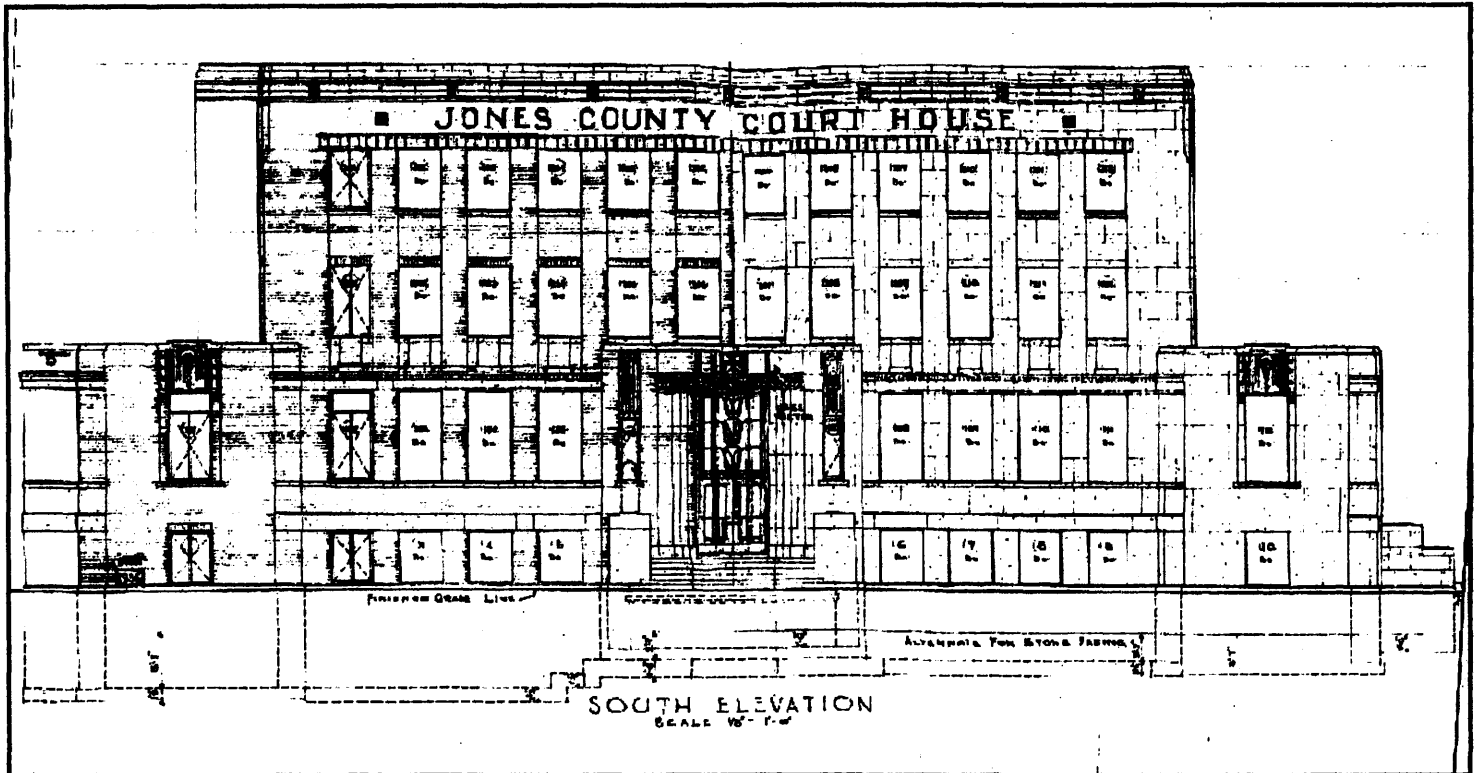
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Front Elevation, Jones County Court House, Anamosa; designed by Dougher, Rich & Woodburn, 1936-1937



vi. Internal organization of the PWA-Era courthouse in Iowa:

The internal organization of the PWA-Era courthouses was not invented during the 1930s. Rather, it was a refinement of the courthouse plan developed by architects during the 1910s and 20s. Generally Classical Revival in style, these buildings introduced the use of the symmetrical, multi-stored box-form for county courthouses. Just as the Classical decoration was stripped from the exterior and replaced with Art Deco detailing, so too was the interior Classical ornamentation. The arrangement of floor space in the new PWA-Era courthouses included a central corridor extending through the building the long way with exits generally at each end on the lowest level. The main entrances were placed mid-way along the long side with the main stairs opposite the front entrance vestibule. The only exception among the Iowa courthouses was in Jones County where the main staircase is at one end of the corridor.

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The principal county offices were located on the main floor which was always located a half story above ground level. This arrangement allowed the rooms located at the raised basement level to have sufficient exterior wall height for good-sized windows and adequate natural light – a frequent complaint in the older courthouses that were being replaced in the 1930s.

Another common feature of the PWA-Era courthouses was the inclusion of working vaults and additional storage vaults in locations designed to better serve the county offices. In nearly every courthouse, working vaults were located in the four corners of the main floor. These vaults were generally equipped with customized shelving and work surfaces for the county records maintained. A “working vault” was open to the public and generally had windows. Concern for fire in these vaults provided a design whereby metal shutters could be dropped to seal out heat in the event of a fire. Additional non-windowed vaults were generally located in the basement. By locating vaults throughout the building, direct access to one of the county offices that needed record storage (auditor, recorder, clerk and treasurer) could be easily accommodated. The risk of fire was minimized by locating most of the working vaults in the subsidiary one-story wings.

The district courtroom was always located on the second floor of the PWA-Era courthouse. By doing so, courthouse visitors conducting county business would be free to use the first floor offices without interrupting the proceedings of the court when it was in session. Location on the second floor had other benefits as well. From a practical perspective, location of the courtroom on the second floor meant it had more direct access to related spaces generally housed on the third floor including jail cellblocks where prisoners were held and jury dormitory spaces where sequestered juries stayed. Another practical reason for putting courtrooms on the second floor was the desire to have an extended ceiling height in these rooms. Placement on the mid level provided a non-attic space for the upper ceiling to fill. And finally, from a psychological perspective, putting the courtrooms in the upper reaches of the courthouse facing the front of the building gave them added importance symbolically. The only exception to this pattern involved the Jones County Court House where the courtroom faces the rear of the building. This exception may be explained by the

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fact that a rear courthouse location provided a clear view of the Anamosa State Penitentiary for courtroom visitors, witnesses, and jurors.

The third or top floor in most of the PWA-Era courthouses was originally designed with space for the county jail and an apartment for the sheriff and his family. These quarters maintained the long - standing tradition in county government of providing quarters for the sheriff immediately adjacent to the jail cell block. Common practice usually saw the sheriff's wife provide matron services for the rare female prisoner and handle cooking and laundry for the prisoners. The sheriff's apartment was usually outfitted with at least three bedrooms. In later years when county jails became more professionalized, these quarters were sometimes used by a resident deputy or courthouse janitor. The kitchens were maintained in several courthouses.

A number of PWA-Era courthouse spaces have been modified or disappeared over time. An essential space in every courthouse in the 1930s was an office for the county superintendent of schools. In at least one such office, a separate space was also reserved for students to take tests. As the rural one-room school system gave way to consolidated school districts headed by separate administrators, the position of county superintendent disappeared. These offices were almost always located on the second floor of courthouses and when abandoned were converted to law libraries, county attorney offices, or magistrate courtrooms.

Another space that appears in several of the PWA-Era courthouses is the public assembly room. This space was usually located on the basement level near an entrance at the end of the central corridor. Sometimes restrooms, a kitchen, and a drinking fountain were located nearby and in at least one courthouse a ticket booth was provided just inside the courthouse door for event attendees. In some cases the assembly rooms were outfitted with a separate, raised stage and in others slate black boards were installed. In counties that have experienced the most growth in the size of government, the assembly rooms have been converted into offices for county offices with the greatest growth – assessor offices and sheriff's offices.

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Jury dormitory spaces were also included in all of the PWA-Era courthouses in the 1930s. Separate rooms were maintained for men and women along with separate restrooms. It is unclear how often these rooms were actually used for sequestered juries but they were included nevertheless. Another jury related space included in several courthouses was a separate grand jury room. This room was generally a moderate sized conference room located immediately adjacent to the county attorney's office. In most counties this court function was accommodated in the district courtroom.

Internal circulation in all of the courthouses included a central staircase and several secondary stairs. These staircases generally extended to all levels of the building and egress at the rear of the building. One of the stairs usually provided direct access to the jail or to an elevator used for delivery of prisoners and suspects. Elevators were included in nearly all of the PWA-Era courthouses at the time of construction. In several, however, elevators were not included because of cost. In these cases, an elevator shaft was shown in the floor plan and used at a later date.

In several of the latter courthouses underground garage spaces were part of the basement level with their use designated for the sheriff. This space took on the name "sally port" (*American Heritage Dictionary*: "a gate in a fortification designated for sorties") in the Warren County Court House. In at least three of the courthouses where underground garage spaces were not initially provided, free-standing garages for the use of the sheriff were constructed within a short-time.

Another courthouse space to function similarly in each of the buildings was the support offices for the district court. In all cases, the judge's chamber or office was located at the rear of the judge's bench in the front of the courtroom. This office was used by the district judge assigned to the county with various judges traveling between counties when district court was in session. The judge's chambers ranged from Spartan finishes to elaborate appointments. Improvements made through the years by various judges or county clerks make it difficult to identify original surviving finishes. Through the years separate rooms provided for court recorders, conferences, and law

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libraries have been modified as space needs changed. This is likely to continue as technological changes occur. For example, as the 21st century begins, most county law libraries are getting smaller now rather than larger as printed sources are replaced by electronic sources. One of the PWA-Era courthouses in Des Moines County Court has the largest collection of printed materials in its law library.

Internal organization of the PWA-Era courthouses was without a doubt considerably more efficient than their predecessor buildings. County offices had more floor space, better light, and better ventilation. Other technological improvements such as electrical outlets, centralized clocks, telephone lines, and elevators encouraged efficiency as well.

vii. *PWA Architects in Iowa*

The role of professional architects in the PWA program was frequently debated in architectural journals of the day. Like other Americans, architects were faced with the problems of maintaining their businesses during the Depression years. Private design commissions became rare and with many design contracts still based on a percentage of construction costs, architect's fees were in decline as well. Once a national public works program was announced in 1933, architects were disappointed to see that the first PWA regulations that were issued did not allow architectural fees to be covered by grants. This was changed when new regulations came out some months into the program.

For substantial public buildings such as county courthouses, however, there was never any doubt that an architect would be employed to prepare plans and specifications. The matter of selecting an architect was not a foregone conclusion, however. Would the architect be hired after a request for credentials was circulated? Would the architect be hired before or after the PWA grant was awarded? How would the architect be compensated? What was the role of the architect as construction supervisor or inspect? There appears to have been no set answers to these questions

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with each of the architects involved in Iowa PWA-Era courthouses operating differently.

The architects designing courthouses in Iowa during the PWA period all appear to have had experience in designing substantial buildings during the 1920s. Two of the firms specifically had experience in designing courthouses that they applied to the design of PWA projects. Though commissions for three of the courthouses were awarded to smaller firms from communities with close proximity to the courthouse towns, most of the jobs were won by two Des Moines firms. In the case of one of these firms, Keffer & Jones, the firm had two courthouses under construction simultaneously while in the case of the other large firm, Dougher, Rich & Woodburn also from Des Moines, projects occurred sequentially without much overlap.

A brief summary of the five architectural firms and architects who designed Iowa courthouses during the PWA period follows. The architects appear chronologically based on the dates of completion for the courthouses.

Dougher, Rich & Woodburn: James A. Dougher (1894-1976), Herbert E. Rich (? – ca. 1949), and Chester C. Woodburn (1893-1960) formed their partnership in Des Moines in 1923. Both Dougher and Rich had earlier worked for another Des Moines firm, Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson. Woodburn worked as a structural engineer for Keffer & Jones, also in Des Moines. Dougher's strength apparently lay in administration while Rich's aptitude was for design and Woodburn's interest was in engineering and the business rather than the professional side of architecture according to historian Wesley Shank.¹⁸

During the 26 years that the firm practiced, the firm developed a substantial reputation in the state eventually receiving commissions for many schools, churches, and hospitals. The firm designed the Temple B'nai Jeshurun, St. Lukes Parish House, and Plymouth Congregational Church, all in Des Moines during the 1920s as well as the Presbyterian Church in Fairfield, the Methodist Church in

¹⁸Wesley I. Shank, *Iowa's Historic Architects: A Biographical Dictionary* (Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa

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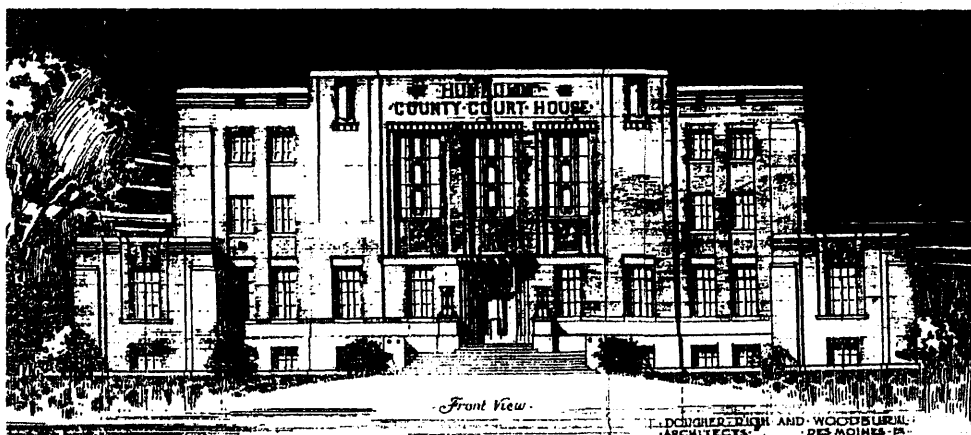
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Indianola, and the Methodist Church in Macedonia. Among their Iowa school projects were buildings in Boone, Hampton, Marshalltown, Muscatine, Marengo, Washington, Macedonia, Mt. Ayr, Dawson, Avoca, Creston, Hamburg, Keosauqua, Woodbine, Coon Rapids, Stratford, Sac City, Pomeroy, Shipley, and Altoona.¹⁹

The firm developed a solid reputation for their work on county courthouses in the state as well. Commissions included the Cass County Court House (1933-1934) in Atlantic, the Jones County Court House (1936-1937) in Anamosa, the Humboldt County Court House (1938-1939) in Dakota City, and the Buchanan County Court House (1939) in Independence. One of the techniques used by the firm to make the design process more efficient and their costs less expensive during the early stages of a courthouse campaign was to reuse the same preliminary design. To do this they offered a reworked design of the Cass County Court House for the new county. The local newspapers in Buchanan and Humboldt counties published the nearly identical courthouse drawings (below and the following page).

Proposed Humboldt County Court House (below); Proposed Buchanan County Court House (next page)²⁰



Press, 1999, pp. 52, 141, & 178.

¹⁹"Architect's Description of Building," *Humboldt County Republican*, Humboldt, Iowa, March 10, 1939; and Barbara Beving Long, "Architects in Iowa Study," various working files prepared for the State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines, Iowa, September 1984.

²⁰"To Lay Cornerstone of Court House," *The Humboldt Republican*, April 29, 1938; "Architects Drawing of Proposed Court House," *Independence Conservative*, May 25, 1938.

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By the end of the 1930s, Dougher, Rich & Woodburn also secured commissions for courthouses in Hamilton, Jackson and Union counties. PWA grants and local referenda were not approved for these counties before PWA funding was discontinued.

Designs for the four New Deal Era courthouses by the firm 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 and county offices opening onto the corridor. Common materials include buff colored brick, Bedford limestone, multi-colored terrazzo floors, marble wainscoting, and acoustic tile. Though the courtroom designs are distinctly different, each originally used dark wood tones and Art Deco ornamentation.

Mortimer Cleveland: Mortimer B. Cleveland (1882-1979) returned to his hometown of Waterloo, Iowa to start his architectural practice after graduating from the University of Illinois in 1908. His work primarily included residential commissions in Waterloo's Highland District. Identified as one of Iowa's earliest Prairie School architects by architectural historian Wesley Shank, more than 40 of

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Cleveland's house designs have been identified in the Highland District.²¹

In the years leading up to World War I, Cleveland began adding commercial and office buildings to his design work. Most of these early commissions were located in Waterloo and were for former residential building clients. During the 1930s he started designing telephone exchange buildings for Northwestern Bell throughout northeast and central Iowa. Though utilitarian buildings, Cleveland designed most in the Moderne Style with some containing Art Deco embellishments. A measure of their success is the fact that many survive with new uses and minimal alteration 50 to 60 years after their initial construction. Northwestern Bell commissions in Iowa were completed in Anamosa, Cedar Falls, Decorah, Dubuque, Elkader, Maquoketa, Marshalltown, Mason City, New Hampton, Oelwein, Vinton, Waterloo, and Waverly.²²

As one of only a handful of professionally trained architects in northeast Iowa, commissions for public buildings including schools, hospitals, and churches began coming his way. He designed nearly every high school, junior high, and elementary building in Waterloo from ca. 1915 through World War II. During these years and continuing after the war he had commissions for schools in Charles City, Centerville, Bayard, and Independence. Hospital work included Allen Memorial Hospital in Waterloo, St. Anne's Hospital in Algona, Charles City Hospital, and Mitchell County Memorial Hospital in Osage. Church commissions were spread across northeast and north central Iowa with several works completed in Des Moines as well.

Mortimer Cleveland designed only one PWA courthouse in Iowa for Bremer County. Erected in 1936-1937, its basic plan and form were typical of other Moderne Style courthouses built during the decade. Unlike the other nine PWA-Era courthouses that used Bedford limestone for trim, the primary stone trim specified by Cleveland for the Bremer County Court House was Kasota stone, a cream colored limestone. Other aspects of the building's design would make it difficult to differentiate from designs by other Iowa PWA architects. It has a rectilinear floor plan and a

²¹Shank, pp. 42-43.

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symmetrical façade with a central 3½-story section flanked by 2½-story wings at each end. Each floor has a central corridor extending the length of the building with county offices opening onto it. Interior finishes in common with other PWA-Era courthouses include multi-colored terrazzo floors, marble wainscoting, and acoustic tile.

Keffer & Jones: 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. Headquartered in Des Moines, 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.²³

The firm developed a similar reputation for their work on county courthouses in Iowa. Commissions included the O'Brien County Court House (1915-1917) in Primghar, the Ringgold 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 in the state – a basic form that would be repeated in subsequent design efforts.

The three New Deal Era courthouses designed by the firm 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

²²Long, "Architects in Iowa Study."

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brick, Bedford limestone, multi-colored terrazzo floors, marble wainscoting, and acoustic tile. Though the courtroom designs are distinctly different, each originally used dark wood tones and simplified Art Deco ornamentation.

Charles Altfillisch: Charles Altfillisch (1892-1978) was a native Iowan who after obtaining degrees in both engineering and architecture set up his practice in Decorah at the end of World War I. His work included a wide variety of building types with commissions principally located in Allamakee, Winneshiek, Howard, and Fayette counties in northeast Iowa. His work included residences, schools, hospitals, swimming pools, gymnasiums, and city halls.

During the 1930s he completed a number of public building designs in the Moderne Style including the Allamakee County Court House in 1938-1939. Other buildings employing this style were the West Side Elementary School, Middle School Gymnasium, and Municipal Swimming Pool, all in Decorah, the Calmar Public School, the Postville City Hall, and the Lansing City Hall. All of these examples except for the swimming pool were rendered in brick and stone. During the same decade he began to develop a preference for the use of reinforced concrete and concrete block. Many of these designs took on the International Style. Altfillisch's commissions included a number of collegiate buildings. The campus of Luther College in Decorah held several of his designs as did the University of Iowa campus in Iowa City.

Charles Altfillisch designed only one PWA-Era courthouse in Iowa for Allamakee County. Erected in 1938-1939, its basic plan and form were typical of other Moderne Style courthouses built during the decade. It was constructed of pressed brick with Bedford limestone for trim and its exterior design differed little from the other PWA-Era courthouses in the state. Its interior had a similar central corridor arrangement with offices, central staircase, etc. but its finishes subtly differed from treatments found in other PWA-Era courthouses. The interior color pallet was monochromatic with the terrazzo floors laid out in large squares. Public corridors were given simple plaster and marble

²³Ibid., p. 94.

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finishes and plain, low-maintenance aluminum handrails were employed rather than painted decorative wrought iron and brass. Although Altfillisch's engineering background is evidenced in an overall utilitarian design of the interior spaces and finishes, more structural problems have been associated with this PWA-Era courthouse than any other.

Hansen & Waggoner: Harry P. Hansen (1889-1955) and Karl M. Waggoner (1894-1966) formed their partnership in 1923. Both architects had begun their professional careers working for Waterloo architects prior to World War I, Hansen for Clinton Shockley and Waggoner for Mortimer Cleveland. After serving in the war, obtaining additional training, and working brief stints for other architects, the two men relocated to Mason City where they opened the firm of Hansen & Waggoner.

During the next three decades Hansen & Waggoner secured commissions for residences, dozens of commercial buildings, schools, and churches in Mason City and other north central Iowa communities. Among their most notable projects were the Wagner-Mozart Music Hall in Mason City completed in 1929 and the Iowa Masonic Library in Cedar Rapids completed in 1955.

Hansen & Waggoner designed the last PWA-Era courthouse to be constructed in the state for Floyd County. Erected in 1940-1941, its basic plan and form were typical of the nine other Moderne Style courthouses built during the previous decade. It was constructed of pressed brick with Bedford limestone and red granite for trim. Its form included a raised center section with a dramatic entrance. The interior arrangement had offices opening onto a central corridor with a central staircase opposite the main entrance conducting visitors between floors. Interior finishes included marble wainscoting, multi-colored terrazzo floors, and glass block in office entrances and stairwell sidelights. The courtroom is among the most elaborately finished and best preserved of the PWA-Era courthouses.

C.C. Larsen & Sons Company: Of the hundreds of contracting companies involved in the construction of PWA-Era courthouses in Iowa, the general contracting firm of C.C. Larsen & Sons stands out. It was founded by Chris C. Larsen, a Danish immigrant who settled in the Council Bluffs

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area in the early 1880s where he worked as a mason. There he became a charter member of the bricklayers union and in 1920 formed a construction company along with his sons James, George, and Louis. The firm had a brisk business constructing dozens of public and private buildings in Iowa and Nebraska. The 1930s saw C.C. Larsen and Sons construct three PWA funded courthouses including those in Cass, Jones and Buchanan counties. A third generation joined the family business in the 1940s when James' sons, George and Edward, obtained civil and mechanical engineering degrees. The company used their PWA experience during World War II completing contracts for army installations in Lincoln and Harvard, Nebraska. The 1950s saw the firm complete the Council Bluffs Water Works and the Broadway Viaduct as well as a major addition to the Glenwood State School.

Summary:

For more than a decade the Great Depression brought economic hardship to every section of the United States. Among the most important responses by the federal government was a national public works program on a scale without precedent in this country. Hundreds of construction projects were undertaken in Iowa as a part of this national campaign. Nine county courthouses were built between 1934 and 1941 through the federal Public Works Administration. Another courthouse was begun while the PWA was still in operation but was not funded by the program. Together, these ten buildings tell the story of the PWA from its early days when a national bureaucracy was being invented and tested through its heyday when the PWA was front-page news in nearly every county newspaper to its concluding days when popularity of the PWA program left late-coming applicant counties with no federal assistance.

The courthouses also demonstrate the design qualities and attributes of the PWA Moderne architectural style that grew out of this massive national public works program. Designed by some of Iowa's leading architectural firms, the fact that all of the courthouses remain in use as seats of county government 60 years after their construction is testimony of their success.

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F. Associated Property Types of PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa, 1934 – 1941

i. *Property Type:* County Courthouses and Associated Structures

ii. *Description:*

The historic resources in this property type are geographically distributed across Iowa in the county seat communities of 10 Iowa counties including:

- Allamakee County, Waukon
- Audubon County, Audubon
- Bremer County, Waverly
- Buchanan County, Independence
- Cass County, Atlantic
- Des Moines County, Burlington
- Floyd County, Charles City
- Humboldt County, Dakota City
- Jones County, Anamosa
- Warren County, Indianola

County courthouses are the primary resources associated with this historic context. All date from the period 1934 to 1941 when the PWA and its successor program, the Federal Works Agency, were active in Iowa. In addition to courthouses, contributing resources may include the courthouse sites, flagpoles, statues, or garages built contemporaneous with the courthouses. Non-contributing resources may include commemorative monuments, communication towers, garages, and other miscellaneous resources that are less than 50 years old.

The physical integrity of resources in the study ranges from well-preserved, nearly original condition to substantially intact with minor alterations to moderately well preserved. Evaluation of alterations should be made on a case-by-case basis with alterations considered acceptable if they are reversible, if they were carried out in a manner that left significant design features intact, or if

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they were completed in order to comply with modern building and safety code requirements for public buildings and jails.

iii. Significance

The historic resources for this historic context represent noteworthy examples of PWA Moderne Style public buildings erected during the period 1934 to 1941. The ten courthouses were designed by five Iowa architectural firms including four designed by Dougher, Rich & Woodburn of Des Moines, three by Keffer & Jones of Des Moines, and one each by Mortimer Cleveland of Waterloo, Charles Altfillisch of Decorah, and Hansen and Waggoner of Mason City. All of the buildings are constructed of brick and stone with decoration varying from elaborate Art Deco designs to simplified, stripped down Art Deco elements. Common interior features include monumental courtroom spaces, decorative plaster cornices in public entrances and lobbies, use of polished stone for walls and floors, and incorporation of polished metal finishes for both decorative and utilitarian elements. Though a number of the buildings share common design features borrowed freely from one building to the next, each has a distinct character that is distinguished by overall size, courtroom design, and specific decorative treatments.

iv. Registration Requirements

a. Area of Significance

In order to be deemed significant, one or more of the National Register of Historic Places criteria must be met. Evaluations made in preparation of the PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa historic context found courthouses and related resources to be significant under National Register Criteria A and/or C. No examples were found for Criteria B or D, although in several cases it is possible that historic archeological remains may exist of earlier courthouse buildings, jails, sheriff's residences, or other landscape structures.

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Criterion A: Properties deriving significance under this criterion should be associated with the theme of government. Each functioned as the headquarters for county government, an important administrative division of state law. Here political decisions were made and regulations carried out that affected the county road system, taxation laws, county judicial system, county records and licenses, and hospitals. The importance of these courthouses is enhanced by the fact that they are all connected to the first nationally funded public works effort in the United States aimed at local government buildings – the PWA program. Nine of the ten courthouses derive significance from the fact that they were funded with matching PWA grants. The other courthouse (Floyd County) also derives significance from this association because an application was made, architectural plans prepared, and a county referendum approved for it under the PWA program's application process. Though it was not financed with a PWA grant due to a discontinuation of federal appropriations for the program, its strong association with the historic context of PWA-Era Courthouses remains evident.

Criterion B: Properties should be associated with the careers of individuals who made outstanding contributions to the administration of county government or as district court judges. No such cases were identified.

Criterion C: Individual properties should illustrate architectural elements, building forms, building types, materials, and construction practices that were associated with the "PWA Moderne Style." Individual properties may also be associated with the work of one of the architectural firms that designed public buildings during the 1930s in Iowa in conjunction with the PWA program. The ten county courthouses constructed between 1934 and 1941 are good examples of the national design trends embodied in the public buildings erected through the non-federal PWA program. They demonstrate the adaptability of the central pavilion and subsidiary wing plan to various sizes and sites.

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Criterion D: Properties that are likely to yield important information about earlier government buildings erected on county courthouse sites. Significant elements under this criterion could include sub-surface evidence of non-extant structures (earlier courthouse buildings, jails, sheriff's residences, and garages) including foundations, cisterns, privies, steam heating tunnels, jail yards, sidewalks, music pavilions, etc.

b. Levels of Significance

All properties will be found significant on a local rather than state or national level based on their association with local county government activities. In order to be found significant at the state level, a courthouse should also derive significance from its role as a design prototype for other courthouses in the state or as a model for other referenda campaigns.

One of the ten courthouses evaluated under this historic context was found to meet the criteria for statewide significance – the Cass County Court House in Atlantic. It was the first of the PWA funded courthouses approved and first erected in the state. Later it was included as an example of what could be accomplished with a PWA grant in several local campaigns in other parts of Iowa. In one instance a newspaper article promoting the referendum campaign in Warren County used the Cass County building as an example of what could be built in Indianola. In another case, the auditor in Jones County communicated with his counterpart in Cass County to secure suggestions for organizing the Jones County referendum effort. Later, sections of the campaign literature appeared verbatim in a promotional article about the referendum that appeared in a Buchanan County newspaper. The Cass County Court House's design was copied in these promotional efforts as well including Humboldt and Buchanan counties. Finally, the Cass County Court House's importance on a statewide level is suggested by its inclusion as the only Iowa courthouse in the 1939 survey of PWA projects written by C.W. Short and R. Stanley-Brown and published by the federal government.

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c. *Integrity Considerations*

The county courthouses investigated for this study were found to be substantially intact. Most of the changes that were made were a function of building safety, accessibility requirements, and changes in use dictated by the evolving and expanding roles for county government. Because the buildings were erected at a time when many modern office features (elevators, telephones, electricity, central clocks, and multiple exit routes) were incorporated into their original designs, the buildings have survived with minimal to moderate changes necessary. A summary of the types of changes found and their impact on overall integrity follows.

Windows: The most common alteration found in all of the buildings was window replacement. The first window changes began appearing in the late 1970s with the most recent completed in the early 1990s. In several courthouses, a second set of replacement windows was currently in place. In all of the courthouses, the original window openings were retained with full-size replacement sash of varying configurations replacing the original windows. In only a few cases were the sizes of selected original openings permanently altered using masonry materials. In nearly all of the window replacement cases, the windows were installed using federal grants. Evolving window technology makes it likely that courthouse windows will continue to be replaced at regular intervals over the lives of these buildings. As a result, window replacement was not considered an alteration that would prevent a courthouse from being National Register eligible. Window openings were also examined to determine to what extent changes had been made in decorative window grillwork. Removal of these elements would be considered a more serious alteration.

Jails: A second type of alteration found in all of the courthouses involved a range of changes made to the areas occupied by or formerly occupied the jail. In buildings where new law enforcement centers or county jails have been erected, former jail spaces were frequently found to be remodeled into offices. In instances where the jail space was retained in the courthouse, modifications typically included abandonment of sheriff's residences, modification of office areas, expansion of jail cell areas, security changes, and the addition of fire safety measures. In many

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cases, these changes were mandated by federal and state law or were a result of changes in jail occupancy levels. Though these changes are regrettable from a historic sense, they reflect the organic nature of these courthouses and the changing obligations of county government.

Building additions: In some courthouses, modifications of jails were insufficient to handle the changes required by evolving law enforcement practices. In these cases construction of law enforcement additions was deemed necessary. In two instances, these additions were financed with the assistance federal grants. These additions were judged to be acceptable alterations to the courthouses if they were constructed on a non-principal façade, if the materials used in their construction was compatible with the original building, and if the addition did not overpower the original building through the judicious use of setback, scale, and screening measures.

Masonry changes: A fourth type of change involved modifications of masonry exteriors. At least one courthouse had its exterior brick and stonework cleaned. This was considered acceptable if no significant loss in decorative stone detailing was observed. In two courthouses, exterior finish bricks were replaced; in one instance the work was so substantial as to negate the building's architectural significance. Brick replacement was judged to be acceptable if it was done in small areas to replace severely deteriorating brick and if the color and finish of the replacement brick matched that of the original brick. Original stonework was required to be left unaltered in all cases.

Other changes: Other alterations commonly found in courthouses were based on changing building code and fire code requirements for public buildings. Still others were done in order to respond to the requirements of modern office practices and the growth in size of county government. Most of these changes were completed during the past 20 to 30 years. These alterations were evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine whether or not they were carried out in a manner that left significant design features intact. Examples of common alterations and their impact include the following:

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Building additions: In some courthouses, modifications of jails were insufficient to handle the changes required by evolving law enforcement practices. In these cases construction of law enforcement additions was deemed necessary. In two instances, these additions were financed with the assistance federal grants. These additions were judged to be acceptable alterations to the courthouses if they were constructed on a non-principal façade, if the materials used in their construction was compatible with the original building, and if the addition did not overpower the original building through the judicious use of setback, scale, and screening measures.

Masonry changes: A fourth type of change involved modifications in masonry exteriors. At least one courthouse had its exterior brick and stonework cleaned. In the case of two courthouses, portions of the exterior finish brick were replaced. Cleaning was considered acceptable if no significant loss in decorative stone detailing was observed. Brick replacement was judged to be acceptable if it was done to replace severely deteriorating brick and if the color and finish of the replacement brick matched or was very similar to the original brick. Original stonework was required to be left unaltered.

Other changes: Other alterations commonly found in courthouses were based on changing building code and fire code requirements for public buildings. Still others were done in order to respond to the requirements of modern office practices and the growth in size of county government. Most of these changes were completed during the past 20 to 30 years. These alterations were evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine whether or not they were carried out in a manner that left significant design features intact. Examples of common alterations and their impact include the following:

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- Introduction of fire glass or wire glass partition walls in multi-story stairwells; installation of self-closing doors in openings to provide fire-separation between various zones in the buildings. The impact of these changes was evaluated in terms of the visual impact they had on important design features.
- Installation of a wide range of replacement or supplementary light fixtures and ceiling fans. Loss of important entrance lights, vestibule lights, central stairwell lights, or courtroom light fixtures was considered more serious than the loss of county office light fixtures. In cases where supplementary fixtures were in use, the continued presence of original fixtures helped to retain integrity.
- Installation of additional electrical capacity for outlets and wiring for computer systems. This change was considered to have no impact on integrity.
- Introduction of central air conditioning including related ductwork. This change was considered an acceptable change for continued use as modern office space.
- Rearrangement of county office areas including installation of new inner offices, lowered ceilings, and new public service counters.
- Courtroom changes including reduction in size, modification of lighting systems, installation of carpeting, refinishing woodwork, window closure, and various security measures. Reductions in size of a courtroom's floor plan had the most potential for being serious changes in these spaces. When the change was made by moving the rear wall of the courtroom, it was not considered a major change. Reduction in size along the window side or the alteration of window openings was considered a more serious change. Depending on the manner in which these changes were done, this courtroom change could be considered a serious alteration. Installation of carpeting was considered an acceptable change so long as the original floor finish, usually asphalt tile, was retained in place. Refinishing of woodwork was not considered a serious change so long as the original finish was replicated. If the color was similar the change was considered acceptable.
- Installation of replacement floor coverings in office areas. The installation of carpeting in county office areas that formerly had asphalt tile surfaces was commonplace in the PWA-Era courthouses. In most cases the application was made directly over the original tile floors retaining historic materials in place. As a result, such floor covering changes were considered acceptable.
- Introduction of improvements designed to assist the disabled including restroom changes, interior and exterior ramps, and changes in opening sizes. These changes were made as a result of federal, state, and local building code changes required for public buildings. In most cases these changes were accomplished in the courthouses without the loss of historic fabric. Rare exceptions included the removal of gates in the balustrades or bars of courtrooms. Though regrettable, these losses were considered modest and, in cases where the gates were put in storage, reversible.
- Installation of elevators, although most architectural plans provided for elevator locations. The addition of an elevator is a necessary requirement for modern public

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buildings. If the elevator was added in a manner that did not destroy significant historic fabric it was considered an acceptable alteration.

v. *Individually Eligible Properties*

Ten PWA-Era courthouses built between 1934 and 1941 and one courthouse built in 1952 were evaluated for this study. None are presently listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Using the registration requirements listed above, it was determined that the ten PWA-Era buildings are individually eligible for National Register listing and that the eleventh was not eligible. In several cases secondary structures qualify as contributing resources while in other instances their date of construction makes them non-contributing. A number of objects and a variety of structures were found near the courthouses. Evaluations for these were made on a case by case basis. Age and integrity were the primary determining factors in ascribing contributing or non-contributing status.

Evaluations were also made for each of the courthouse sites, and in all cases they were found to be contributing. This judgement was based on a series of factors. First and foremost, is the strong association of each of the sites with the present buildings or predecessor courthouses in some cases. In other instances, the sites were themselves the product of WPA projects, adding to the historic association of the courthouse squares with the Great Depression. In still other cases, the sites derive significance from the placement of historic objects on their grounds. These include statuary and original flagpoles. And finally, the sites are significant because of the potential each has for yielding historic archeological resources. These principally include building foundations from earlier courthouses, jails, annexes, vault buildings, barns, privies, etc. A summary of contributing and non-contributing resources included in each nomination is found near the end of Section 7 in each courthouse nomination.

A cursory examination was also made of the neighborhoods surrounding of the courthouses to

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determine if any courthouses were part of a potential historic district. In three cases, in Audubon in Audubon County, Atlantic in Cass County, and Indianola in Warren County, portions of surrounding neighborhoods might qualify as National Register historic districts. Local surveys would need to be completed of the adjacent business districts to determine if districts exist.

And finally, no reconnaissance or intensive level archeological surveys were conducted for the courthouse properties included in this MPD. As a result, no significance is claimed under Criterion D. However, as was noted above, an examination of historic records and maps for the courthouse sites indicates that the sites have the potential to yield historic archeological resources related to buildings, structures and objects that predate the PWA-Era Courthouses.

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G. Geographical Data

The "PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa, 1934 – 1941" historic context grew out of a larger historical survey of county courthouses built in the state between 1934 and 1952. Individual National Register nominations were eventually completed for ten county courthouses scattered across all sections of Iowa. The ten counties and county seats containing PWA-Era courthouses include the following:

- Allamakee County, Waukon
- Audubon County, Audubon
- Bremer County, Waverly
- Buchanan County, Independence
- Cass County, Atlantic
- Des Moines County, Burlington
- Floyd County, Charles City
- Humboldt County, Dakota City
- Jones County, Anamosa
- Warren County, Indianola

An eleventh courthouse in Creston in Union County was evaluated as part of the survey but rejected because of integrity issues and because it fell outside of the period of significance established for the historic context.

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

This Multiple Property Document (MPD) form "PWA-Era County Courthouse of Iowa" was completed under the authority of the State Historical Society of Iowa. Marlys A. Svendsen with Svendsen Tyler, Inc. of Sarona, Wisconsin was retained by the State Historical Society of Iowa to complete the courthouse survey. Svendsen served as principal for the project in the capacity of both historian and architectural historian. Svendsen holds a B.A. in history and political science from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. Photographer for the project was Bruce Meyers of Sioux City, Iowa.

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The courthouse survey began with an examination of all records on file with the State Historical Society of Iowa for the 11 subject courthouses. Architects were identified for most of the buildings along with completion dates. Historic photographs and fire insurance maps were gathered for each building and newspapers covering the period of pre-construction and construction were reviewed. Site visits were made by Svendsen to each courthouse where she reviewed documents in the county auditor's offices including architectural drawings, construction records, county supervisors minute books, grand jury record books, commemorative programs from dedication events, and alteration records. A physical examination was made of each courthouse's exterior and interior to determine the level of integrity for each building. The only portions of the buildings not consistently inspected due to restricted access were sections used as jails.

Between late September and mid-November Meyer photographed each of the courthouses using Kodak Select Elitechrome 135 slide film and Kodak Professional 120 Portra film (2¼" format) black and white film. In some cases these photographs were the first extensive documentation of the buildings undertaken since the courthouses were originally constructed more than 60 years ago. Exterior views were recorded of the general site, all exterior façades, intact exterior features such as decorative stonework surrounding entrances, window grillwork, and light fixtures as well as altered elements. In the interior of each courthouse the sections of the building that remained the most intact were recorded most thoroughly. In most cases these sections included entrance vestibules, public lobbies, and courtrooms. Special emphasis was given to documenting commemorative plaques, light fixtures, plasterwork, marble work, courtroom fixtures, and central staircases.

Following an examination of each of the buildings, the consultant developed the registration requirements for courthouses included in the study. This was done in consultation with the staff of the State Historical Society of Iowa. It was determined that the most appropriate historic context for the subject properties was based on their shared relationship as construction projects

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completed under the federal Public Works Administration program during the first decade of the New Deal. Based on this evaluation, 10 of the 11 courthouses included in the study were found to meet the registration requirements, including both the integrity and significance qualifications, for National Register listing under Criteria A and C. Individual National Register nominations were then prepared for 10 courthouses and an Iowa Site Inventory Form was completed for the remaining building.

The final step in the courthouse survey involved preparation of the MPD. A bibliography of primary and secondary sources dealing with the New Deal period was compiled. Special attention was given to sources that dealt with the impact of federal public works programs on local economies, unemployment. Other sources dealing with the trends in architectural design that grew out of the New Deal public works programs were reviewed. Historic events and economic trends particular to the subject counties were reviewed. Primary source material was used to ascertain the attitudes of local communities in which courthouses were built. The careers of individual architects and their firms were studied and comparisons made between buildings designed by the same architects. For comparative purposes National Register MPDs for statewide county courthouse nominations for states bordering Iowa were reviewed to identify shared trends and developments.

The narrative elements of the MPD were then prepared based on the research findings. To set the national scene a brief chronological history of the PWA was prepared. Then, the ten county courthouses built through this program were described as a case study of how the program worked at the state and local level. Finally, the work of the five Iowa architectural firms involved in designed these courthouses was analyzed in order to determine common themes in their design and construction.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Identification and Evaluation, National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form, National Register Bulletin 16B:

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How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form and Iowa's Survey Procedures and Guidelines Manual were used in all assessments of contributing and non-contributing courthouse building.

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Cass County, Auditor's Office in Atlantic, Iowa. Architectural drawings and misc. records.

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