

JUL - 2 1981

IOWA SITE INVENTORY

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

MAY 29 1981

Site Number 51-012-001
District Name _____
Map Reference # 51-012-001
Topo Map Davenport NK 1:250,000

IDENTIFICATION

1. Site Name Jefferson County Courthouse
2. Village/Town/City Fairfield Township _____ County Jefferson
3. Street Address Court Street between Briggs and Hempstead Avenues
4. Legal Location OT 13
Urban: subdivision block
Rural: township range
5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 587 000 northing 4340200; Acreage _____
parcel section
subparcel 1/4 section-1/4 section
6. Owner(s) Name Jefferson County Board of Supervisors
7. Owner(s) Address _____
Fairfield Iowa 52556
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: present Courthouse original Courthouse

DESCRIPTION

9. Date of Construction 1891-93 Architect/Builder H.C. Koch (?), Architect
10. Building Type: single family dwelling multiple family dwelling commercial
 industrial educational other institutional public religious agricultural
11. Exterior Walls: clapboard stone brick board & batten shingles stucco
 other _____
12. Structural System: wood frame with interlocking joints
 wood frame with light members (balloon frame) masonry load-bearing walls
 iron frame steel frame with curtain walls reinforced concrete
 other _____
13. Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated
14. Integrity: original site moved-if so, when? _____
Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site: Aluminum sash installed - also aluminum doors - roof of clock tower removed 1948.
Features: very high stone first level - terra cotta (?) panels-
Note curious little turret tucked between clock tower & principal mass -polygonal tower
15. Related Outbuildings and Property: barn other farm structures
 carriage house garage privy other _____
16. Is the building endangered? no yes-if so, why? _____
17. Surroundings of the building: open land woodland scattered outbuildings
 densely built-up commercial industrial residential other _____
18. Map _____
19. Photo
Roll _____ Frame _____ View _____

SIGNIFICANCE (Indicate sources of information for all statements)

20. Architectural Significance

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

Despite loss of tower roof, this is an attractive courthouse in the Victorian Romanesque mode. Is very like the Montgomery County Courthouse in composition and facade treatment. The towers, up to the clock stage, are nearly identical.

21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) Politics/Government

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

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

See Continuation Sheet

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

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

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

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

Prepared by _____ Date January, 1980
Address _____ Telephone _____
Organization DHP

FOR DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION USE ONLY

1. OFFICE INFORMATION SOURCES ON THIS PROPERTY

COUNTY RESOURCE FILE

WINDSHIELD SURVEY

NATIONAL REGISTER

GRANTS-IN-AID: _____

DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY

REVIEW AND COMPLIANCE PROJECT: _____

OTHER _____

OTHER _____

OTHER _____

2. SUBJECT TRACES

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

3. PHOTO IMAGES

CONTINUATION SHEET

Item Number(s) _____

JEFFERSON COUNTY

Tom Jones, with a bid of 45 cents per square yard, was awarded the lathing and plastering contract to finish the first Jefferson County courthouse at Fairfield, in 1840. The building was a two-story, rectangular box, with a gabled roof, and made of sawed lumber. Such a building amidst a settlement of log cabins must have been a matter of some distinction. The construction was so sturdy that it housed skilled craftsmen after it left the employ of the county until it was destroyed by fire on March 5, 1916. The county commissioners received approval for a new courthouse in 1846. They offered a \$25 prize to be awarded for the best plans and specifications submitted. This second courthouse was made of brick and was finished in 1851. Lumber was hauled from Keokuk, and the 40 by 70 foot structure finally cost \$7,500.

William A. Moore, the Jefferson County Treasurer from 1865 to 1867, had a premonition one night. An unprecedented sum of \$9,000 rested in the courthouse fireproof safe. He had a feeling that the money was in danger, went to the courthouse, wrapped the money, and carried it home. Before morning on that same night, the courthouse safe was blown open and emptied. The burglars had only gotten a few postage stamps. A smiling Mr. Moore reported for work, with \$9,000 in his hands.

By 1875, the county judge refused to hold court in the brick courthouse because of its dilapidated condition and the possibility of risking the welfare of its inhabitants. Crops were poor because of the wet seasons and the county was experiencing some hard times. For three successive years the voters turned down a proposition for constructing a new courthouse. In 1880, the courthouse was abandoned. County offices were rented in whatever space could be found, and court was held in the Harmony Church, as it had been since 1878.

Partisan hostility was the main reason for the continuing failure of the county to construct new quarters. Finally, a special election on November 20, 1890, authorized the construction of the present stone and red brick courthouse. The building was dedicated in 1893. It cost \$73,630.87, which may or may not have included the cost of tearing down the second courthouse. The building appears today essentially as it did in 1893, except for the truncation of the clock tower which took place in 1948.

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