

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 63-020-001  
District Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Map Reference # 63-020-001  
Topo Map Knoxville 1:24,000

## IDENTIFICATION

1. Site Name Marion County Courthouse
2. Village/Town/City Knoxville Township \_\_\_\_\_ County Marion
3. Street Address Main between 2nd and 3rd
4. Legal Location OT Courthouse Square  
Urban: subdivision block parcel subparcel  
Rural: township range section 1/4 section-1/4 section
5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 491900 northing 4573900; Acreage less than 1 ac
6. Owner(s) Name Marion County Board of Supervisors
7. Owner(s) Address Courthouse Knoxville Iowa 50138  
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: present Courthouse original Courthouse

## DESCRIPTION

9. Date of Construction 1896 Architect/Builder M.E. Bell, Builders  
Charles A. Moses, 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 windows and doors. Note original wood and iron staircase - very elaborate metal railing around circular openings on each floor below dome.
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

Simplified Richardsonian Romanesque in style. Note center frontispiece with corner turrets, patterned stonework, and entrance recessed within triple bynian arches on granite columns. Bell chamber is surmounted by clock stage with cut corners and short octagonal spire. One of the tower's corner turrets is extended as a chimney stack.

**21. Historical Significance**

Theme(s) Politics/Government

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

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

See Continuation Sheet

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

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

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

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

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

**FOR DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION USE ONLY**

1. OFFICE INFORMATION SOURCES ON THIS PROPERTY

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

2. SUBJECT TRACES

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

e. \_\_\_\_\_

3. PHOTO IMAGES 79/1-2, 248/19-22,  
241/2-6

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## CONTINUATION SHEET

Item Number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

## MARION COUNTY

In 1845, when Marion County was organized, it had a population of less than 1,500 people. Because the first settlement was only two years old and quite small, the county could not afford to build a proper courthouse. For a little over a year, the county officials had to keep their records and conduct their business at their homes or boarding houses. There were problems with this situation and in 1846, the board of commissioners authorized the taking of bids for the erection of a frame building to be used as a courthouse. The accepted bid was for \$450, which was very reasonable considering that the wood for the framework had to be hewed from a forest with a broad-ax and transported a great distance. The final total cost, which included plastering and some other work on the inside, was about \$700. This building, located across from the northwest corner of the square, was used for 12 years as a courthouse, school, and church. It was later sold for \$928 in June, 1864, and used as a business and dwelling until being torn down.

The second courthouse in Knoxville, built in 1857, cost about \$20,000. It was a 48 by 70 foot brick building of two stories on a stone foundation. It stood in the center of the public square with offices on the first floor and the courtroom on the second floor. This courthouse was a very fine one in its time and stood for about 40 years. In 1895 the building was vacated because of its dangerous condition, and the county officials took temporary offices in some rented rooms.

The present courthouse was completed and accepted on December 30, 1896, at a cost of \$80,000. Made of stone, it is a three-story structure with a tower containing a clock which could be heard to strike the hour throughout the whole city at the time that it was built.

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