

IOWA SITE INVENTORY

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

MAY 29 1981

51:42 1981

Site Number 21-022-001
District Name _____
Map Reference # 21-022-001
Topo Map Spencer 1:24,000

IDENTIFICATION

1. Site Name Clay County Courthouse
2. Village/Town/City Spencer Township _____ County Clay
3. Street Address West 4th Street and 3rd Avenue West
4. Legal Location Chi, Milw. St. P & Pac. RR Aldu, Block 35
5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 325330 northing 4778600; Acreage less than 1 acre
Urban: subdivision block parcel
Rural: township range section
1/4 section-1/4 section
6. Owner(s) Name Clay County Board of Supervisors
7. Owner(s) Address _____ 51301
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: present Courthouse original Courthouse

DESCRIPTION

9. Date of Construction 1901 Architect/Builder _____
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 sandstone
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 windows and main doors.
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

A well-preserved courthouse in a neoclassical style, with largely intact interior mainspaces (tile floors, main staircase). Clock tower and giant portico are impressive exterior features.

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 26 E. Market St., Iowa City, Iowa 52240 Telephone 353-6949
 Organization _____

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	3. PHOTO IMAGES _____
a. _____	_____
b. _____	_____
c. _____	_____
d. _____	_____
e. _____	_____

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

Site Number _____

CONTINUATION SHEET

Item Number(s) _____

CLAY COUNTY

On June 7, 1859, Judge A. W. Hubbard appointed a commission to locate the county seat of Clay County. On July 16, 1859, the commissioners cited a location in what was then called Spencer Township, as their choice. They did make it perfectly clear, however, that the people had a right to accept or reject their selection. As things would have it, the people did reject their selection and asked the following year that Peterson be chosen as the site. A special election was held and ten votes were cast, thus picking Peterson to be the seat of government. The ten voters also authorized the construction of public buildings for a maximum cost of \$6,000. The courthouse was promptly erected. The bill presented by the contractor for the courthouse totaled \$7,500 but he was only paid \$6,900.

Even as the courthouse in Peterson was being constructed, the population of northern Clay County was rapidly growing. In 1871 the county seat was relocated to Spencer. A stock company was organized to build a courthouse. Those who were unable to buy a share with hard cash substituted a day's labor. Upon completion of the building it was sold to the county for \$1,333. By 1882 this courthouse had become too small for the expanding county offices. A new two-story brick courthouse was built for \$4,435 on a lot donated by private citizens in 1884. A Clay County citizen purchased the first courthouse at Spencer to use for a barn. It was then turned into a cement block factory, and in 1908, was cut in half and remade into two houses.

Members of the public voiced complaints that the 1884 courthouse was too plain and unpretentious. By 1900 this sentiment had spread and the beautiful present-day courthouse was constructed and opened in September, 1901. It is a fabulous red stone structure employing pillars capped with terra cotta and domes capped with bronze, that had a final price tag of \$60,000.

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

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name County Courthouses in Iowa Thematic Resources
State IA

Nomination	Type of Review	Decision
1. Adair County Courthouse	- Entered in the National Register	<u>Below Byers 7-2-81</u>
2. Allamakee County Courthouse	-	<u>Previously listed 4.11.77</u>
3. Appanoose County Courthouse	- Entered in the National Register	<u>Below Byers 7-2-81</u>
4. Audubon County Courthouse	-	<u>Previously listed 7.26.77</u>
5. Benton County Courthouse	-	<u>Previously listed 10.8.76</u>
6. Boone County Courthouse	- Entered in the National Register	<u>Below Byers 7-2-81</u>
7. Calhoun County Courthouse	- Entered in the National Register	<u>Below Byers 7-2-81</u>
8. Chickasaw County Courthouse	- Substantive Review	<u>William H. Braxton 7-2-81</u>
9. Clay County Courthouse	- Entered in the National Register	<u>Below Byers 7-2-81</u>
10. Clayton County Courthouse	-	<u>Previously listed 10.8.76</u>
11. Clinton County Courthouse	- Entered in the National Register	<u>Below Byers 7-2-81</u>
12. Crawford County Courthouse	- Entered in the National Register	<u>Below Byers 7-2-81</u>
13. Dallas County Courthouse	-	<u>Previously listed 11.26.73</u>
14. Davis County Courthouse	-	<u>Previously listed 5.3.74</u>
15. Decatur County Courthouse	- Entered in the National Register	<u>Below Byers 7-2-81</u>
16. Delaware County Courthouse	- Substantive Review	<u>William H. Braxton 7-2-81</u>
17. Dickinson County Courthouse	- Entered in the National Register	<u>Below Byers 7-2-81</u>
18. Dubuque County Courthouse	-	<u>Previously listed 6.23.71</u>
19. Fayette County Courthouse	- Entered in the National Register	<u>Below Byers 7-2-81</u>
20. Franklin County Courthouse	-	<u>Previously listed 8.13.75</u>
21. Fremont County Courthouse	- Entered in the National Register	<u>Below Byers 7-2-81</u>
22. Greene County Courthouse	-	<u>Previously listed 12.14.78</u>
23. Grundy County Courthouse	- Entered in the National Register	<u>Below Byers 7-2-81</u>
24. Hancock County Courthouse	- Substantive Review	<u>William H. Braxton 7-2-81</u>

Name Clay County Courthouse
State, County PA Clay
Working Number 529.81.172

Fed Nom or Request—Agency _____
Federal Register Date 2.2.82

Nomination
 Determination of Eligibility
 On Nomination Form

Bldg(s)
 Site
 Object
 Structure
 District

Within:
 Multiple Resource Area
 Thematic Group

Maps
Photos

Nomination prepared by:
 State Staff
 Local
 Other

Entered in the
Action: National Register
 ACCEPT 7.281
 RETURN _____
 REJECT _____

Check if Appropriate:
 State Request for Review
 Keeper's Decision to Review
 2nd Return

I. Evaluation of Resource (cont. on back if necessary)

II. Evaluation of Nomination

	Good			Comments
	Adequate	Poor		
1. Descriptive Statement Short Format <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				
2. Significance Statement Short Format <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				
3. Concepts/Integrity				
4. Concepts/Criteria				
5. Concepts/Boundaries				
6. Contextual Evaluation				

General Comments (cont. on back if necessary):

Reviewer/Date _____

See Attached _____



Clay

MAY 29 1981

CLAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE
SPENCER, CLAY CO., IOWA

PHOTO BY: FRANK HUNTER
1979

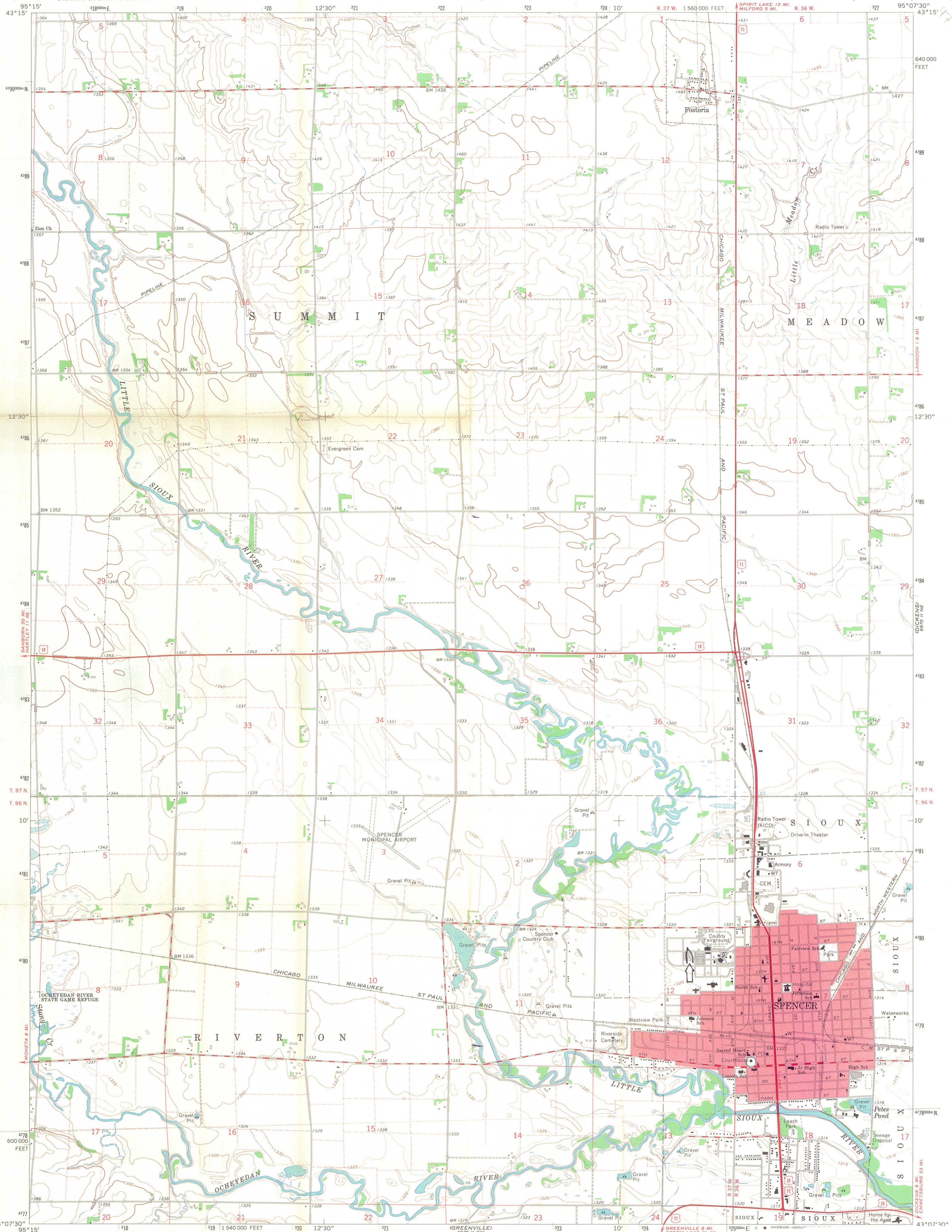
JUL - 2 1981

SOUTH ELEVATION

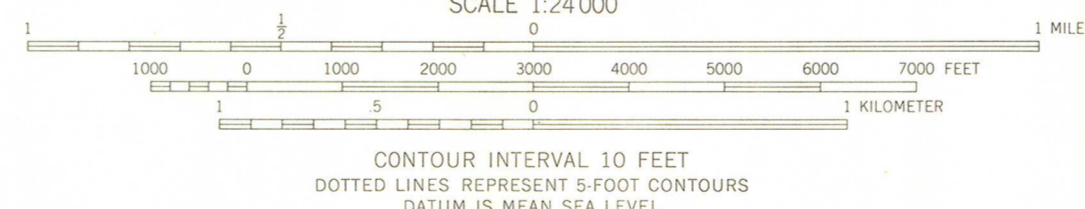
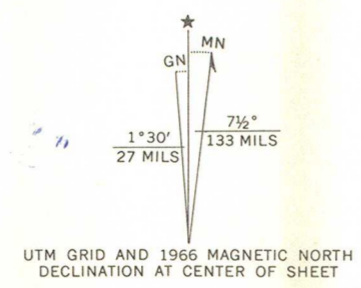
Co. Courthouse on IA State Res.

SITE NUMBER 21-022-001
PHOTOGRAPH NUMBER 1302/1

325-330
1712 600



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USC&GS
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial
photographs taken 1964. Field checked 1966
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Iowa coordinate system, north zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 15, shown in blue
Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
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AND BY THE IOWA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, IOWA CITY, IOWA 52240
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



CLAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE
SPENCER, CLAY CO., IOWA
UTM: 15/325330 477860

SPENCER, IOWA
N4307.5—W9507.5/7.5

1966
AMS 6970 II NW—SERIES V876
JUL - 2 1981