

# Site Inventory Form

State Historical Society of Iowa

(November 2005)

State Inventory No. 92-00150

New  Supplemental

Part of a district with known boundaries (enter inventory no.) 92-00349

Relationship:  Contributing  Noncontributing

Contributes to a potential district with yet unknown boundaries

National Register Status:(any that apply)  Listed  De-listed  NHL  DOE

9-Digit SHPO Review & Compliance (R&C) Number \_\_\_\_\_

Non-Extant (enter year) \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Washington County Courthouse

other names/site number Downtown Survey Map # DT-003

## 2. Location

street & number 222 W. Main Street

city or town Washington

vicinity, county Washington

Legal Description: (If Rural) Township Name \_\_\_\_\_ Township No. \_\_\_\_\_ Range No. \_\_\_\_\_ Section \_\_\_\_\_ Quarter of Quarter \_\_\_\_\_

(If Urban) Subdivision Original Plat Block(s) 7 Lot(s) 5 and 6

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification [Skip this Section]

## 4. National Park Service Certification [Skip this Section]

## 5. Classification

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

### Number of Resources within Property

If Non-Eligible Property

Enter number of:

— buildings  
 — sites  
 — structures  
 — objects  
 — Total

If Eligible Property, enter number of:

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	—
—	—
—	—
—	—
<u>1</u>	—

Name of related project report or multiple property study (Enter "N/A" if the property is not part of a multiple property examination).

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Historical Architectural Data Base Number \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

04J: GOVERNMENT / county courthouse

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

04J: GOVERNMENT / county courthouse

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

09F05: Public / brick front

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation 04: stone – 8" limestone

walls (visible material) 03: brick – 8" thick

roof 08A Asphalt Shingles

other \_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description  SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED

## 8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" representing your opinion of eligibility after applying relevant National Register criteria)

- Yes  No  More Research Recommended
- Yes  No  More Research Recommended
- Yes  No  More Research Recommended
- Yes  No  More Research Recommended

- A Property is associated with significant events.
- B Property is associated with the lives of significant persons.
- C Property has distinctive architectural characteristics.
- D Property yields significant information in archeology or history.

County Washington Address 222 West Main Street  
City Washington

Site Number 92-00150  
District Number 92-00349

**Criteria Considerations**

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B Removed from its original location.
- C A birthplace or grave.
- D A cemetery.
- E A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F A commemorative property.
- G Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)

26: politics/government

02: Architecture

**Significant Person**

(Complete if National Register Criterion B is marked above)

**Significant Dates**

Construction date

1885-87  check if circa or estimated date

Other dates, including renovation

**Architect/Builder**

Architect

William Foster & H. Liebke, Des Moines, Iowa

Builder

T & H Caldwell Builders of LaSalle, Ill.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**  SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Bibliography  See continuation sheet for citations of the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form

**10. Geographic Data**

UTM References (OPTIONAL)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	___	___	2	___	___
3	___	___	4	___	___

See continuation sheet for additional UTM references or comments

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Stacy A. Nielsen, volunteer Rebecca L. McCarley, consultant, Davenport

organization Washington Historic Preservation Commission date May 6, 2012

street & number City Hall – 215 E. Washington St telephone 319-653-6584

city or town Washington state Iowa zip code 52353

**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION** (Submit the following items with the completed form)

**FOR ALL PROPERTIES**

- Map:** showing the property's location in a town/city or township.
- Site plan:** showing position of buildings and structures on the site in relation to public road(s).
- Photographs:** representative black and white photos. If the photos are taken as part of a survey for which the Society is to be curator of the negatives or color slides, a photo/catalog sheet needs to be included with the negatives/slides and the following needs to be provided below on this particular inventory site:

Roll/slide sheet #	___	Frame/slot #	___	Date Taken	___
Roll/slide sheet #	___	Frame/slot #	___	Date Taken	___
Roll/slide sheet #	___	Frame/slot #	___	Date Taken	___

See continuation sheet or attached *photo & slide catalog sheet* for list of photo roll or slide entries.

Photos/illustrations without negatives are also in this site inventory file.

**FOR CERTAIN KINDS OF PROPERTIES, INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING AS WELL**

- Farmstead & District:** (List of structures and buildings, known or estimated year built, and contributing or noncontributing status)

**Barn:**

- A sketch of the frame/truss configuration in the form of drawing a typical middle bent of the barn.
- A photograph of the loft showing the frame configuration along one side.
- A sketch floor plan of the interior space arrangements along with the barn's exterior dimensions in feet.

**State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Use Only Below This Line**

Concur with above survey opinion on National Register eligibility:  Yes  No  More Research Recommended

This is a locally designated property or part of a locally designated district.

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluated by (name/title): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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<u>Washington County Courthouse</u>	<u>Washington</u>
Name of Property	County
<u>222 West Main Street</u>	<u>Washington</u>
Address	City

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*This form was prepared as part of a research/survey/nomination project in 2011-2012 funded by a HRDP grant from the State Historical Society of Iowa for the nomination of the Washington Downtown Historic District. The project was primarily structured to develop the nomination for the downtown, with additional research on each building documented on an Iowa Site Inventory form. The information below is taken from the table in the August 2012 draft of the nomination, with additional information documented on the property and photographs in the following sections.*

**Washington County Court House - 222 W. Main St** - State #92-00150 - Map #1 ~ 1 contributing building (A and C) (Listed on NRHP in 1981) - 1885-87 - Romanesque

Historic information:

1885-87 - courthouse built under direction of architect William Foster of Des Moines

1887-2010s - county courthouse

2012 - Washington County Courthouse

Architectural information:

Height: 2 story

Walls: brick

Windows: 1/1 windows (replaced)

Architectural details: corner tower with arch entries and statues, brick accented by stone details

Architect/Builder: Foster & Liebke (architects - Des Moines), C. & H. Caldwell (contractor, LaSalle, IL)

Modifications: Historic: 1920 - clock installed in tower; Non-historic: 1969 - new mechanics and faces for clock on tower, 1980s - windows replaced

## 7. Narrative Description

Completed in 1887, the Washington County Courthouse is an excellent example of Iowa's Victorian Romanesque courthouses. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1981. The brick was manufactured locally at the Frank E. Swift brickyards. Trimmed with white stone, its entrance was originally ornamented with figures of Justice and Liberty. A decorative clock tower stands at the southwest corner of the structure with slate roof shingles laid in decorative patterns. Arches on the entries on the south and west sides proudly proclaim the year of construction, 1886.

## 8. Narrative Statement of Significance

The Washington County Courthouse contributes historically and architecturally to the Washington Downtown Historic District. Additionally, it was previously listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1981.

Construction efforts in Washington in the 1880s turned to construction of a new courthouse. Since the courthouse on the square had been demolished in 1869, the county did not have a building devoted to this purpose. The courthouse operated on the second story of Everson's Opera House through most of

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this period, with a fire on the roof of this building in 1883 perhaps leading it to move to “music hall” (the old United Presbyterian Church) on W. Jefferson for a few years, as the 1885 Sanborn map shows the courthouse there. In December 1884, the decision was made on the location for the new courthouse, a block west of the northwest corner of the square to the west of the new City Hall. William Foster and Henry Liebke of Des Moines were selected as the architects for the new courthouse. The plans were adopted in April 1885, and the contract was let to C and H. Caldwell of LaSalle, IL for \$63,472. The courthouse was designed to be fireproof, with bricks laid in spaces between iron floor joists and a slate tile roof. Delays in construction stretched it into 1887, and the county offices finally moved into the building in November 1887 (Foster 1978: 31-34). The courthouse was described in the 1887 county history as a “handsome brick structure trimmed with stone, presenting a very fine appearance” (*Portrait and Biographical Album of Washington County 1887*: 649). It was 98 by 80 feet at the base, with sheriff’s office in the basement; clerk’s room, auditor’s office, treasurer’s office, recorder’s office, supervisor’s office on the first story; and court room with a 23-foot ceiling, judge’s office, library room, attorney’s room, bailiff’s room, toilet room, and jury rooms on the second story. Final cost including furnishings was \$75,000 (*Portrait and Biographical Album of Washington County 1887*: 650). At the same time, the jail and sheriff’s residence was constructed on the lot to the north at 219 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, occupied on January 1, 1886 (*Portrait and Biographical Album of Washington County 1887*: 650). The county jail was used until construction of the current building on this site in 1965-66, and the courthouse continues to be used for this function.

The two lots that the courthouse were built on were sold to Washington County between 1882 and 1884. The 1885 Sanborn Map shows the foundation of the courthouse under construction. Then the 1892 Sanborn Map shows “courthouse”. Washington County courthouse was designed by the firm of William Foster and H. Liebke out of Des Moines, Iowa. Builders were T & H Caldwell and the bricks used for its construction were manufactured locally at the Frank E. Swift brickyards. The following are excerpts from author Kathy Fisher’s history *In The Beginning There Was Land* (Foster 1978: 34).

Architects William Foster and Henry Liebke of De Moines were selected to design a court house for Washington County, and the *Press* reported that “William Foster was in town to look about the courthouse. He stands way up in his profession.”

The Plans for the court house were adopted in April 1885, and Foster agreed “to come here every fortnight or oftener if needed.” The contract between Foster and the board stipulated that, “unless the building can be contracted for by responsible parties at \$65,000, the amount appropriated, the architect’s work will be gratis.”

The building contract was let to C. and H. Caldwell of LaSalle, Illinois, for \$63,472. According to the *Democrat*, “Much of the ornamental part of the building had to be left off and the dome and roof lowered from the original plan to bring it within the amount appropriated... It differs in style of architecture from anything in town and will therefore be a relief...The floors will be made with iron joists bricked in and filled with cement. Two inch strips will be laid on this, filled between with cement, and the flooring laid on these. There being no air space below, it will almost impossible for the floor to burn. The roof will be entirely of iron and tiling.” Foundations for the building were to be in by the middle of November, and the place became “a regular stone quarry;”

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By April of '86, the outside walls were going up. Architect Foster came, took one look, and ordered work stopped and one-and-a-half days "lay" taken down. He said the Muscatine pressed brick wasn't up to the quality and appearance of the specimen submitted for the contract....

Work was held up again that summer, while workmen waited on some stone columns; on July 7, the Gazette reported: "The granite columns for which the courthouse builders have been waiting so long were found at the C.R. I. & P. depot where they have been all the time." The columns and other stone trim came from Cleveland and Berea, Ohio.

After the iron joists were in, the court house was covered so fires could be kept to dry out the walls. By October '86 the attic was ready and the big iron water tank was hoisted into place.

Work on the building continued into 1887, and there was big excitement when the statues were placed over the entrance doors. Howard Burell wrote..."the statues are 8 feed high, of zinc, stone colored. They are busters; lusty dames are they. One is the Goddes of Justice (looking) south; let her be Jess or 'Jesstice.' The other is the Goddess of Liberty. Call her 'She' after the wonderful African (white) creature Haggard has so powerfully sketched. She holds a gilt Roman short sword in her right hand, a shield in her left, and a golden starry filet on her brow. Jess wields a modern sword of gilt in her right hand, and in her left, the emblematical scales. ...figures are pivoted each on a pillar 4 or 5 feet high, let into a socket at the lower edge of the skirts. "

During July 'the only cool place in town was within its thick walls or in its basements," Mosaic tiles were being laid on the floors, and the contractor was advertising for "finish carpenters." The steam pipes were tried out and worked....but gas jets were late in arriving.

The tower, which extended 131 feet above the basement floor, was topped by a wooden structure. ...On August 10, Charley Harrison climbed the tower and put up the lightning rod.

The supervisors accepted the final Foster & Liebbe report....

Connecting with the Auditor's office is a room for the Supervisors. There are bailiffs' and jury rooms on the second floor. The stairways are of easy ascent. "There is a world of room in the basement – storage rooms. Down there is the furnace room where Janitor Norwood presides. There are also retiring rooms for both sexes, but the water connection to cleanse them have not been made. On the courtroom floor are water closets and lavatories. The steam heating works well.

The court house was 'newly furnished by degrees,' but a few pieces of the old furniture were retained. In 1917 some minor repair work was done, colored glass windows were removed and replaced with clear sanded glass, and the old stone walk was replaced with cement. (The stones from the walks were taken by Frank Beatty for use as a feed lot floor at the County Home.)

The tower...originally built with an 8 foot space at the top for a clock – but not until 1920 was a clock installed. In March of that year, the Washington Improvement League named a committee to see about getting the town clock installed in the court house tower. The clock, built by the Howard Clock Co. of Waltham, Mass., had originally been placed in the tower of the Washington Academy, in 1874. Removed, when the Academy was torn down in the fall of 1919, and town and county officials finally agreed that it could be placed in the court house tower. The big bell started its journey to the tower on April 7, 1920; it weighed over 1,000 pounds, and had to be pulled up two long flights of stairs – with several twists and turns- and then hoisted up two stories into the tower. John Nickerson and Ed Donovan had the contract to install the bell, and they had several men with

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big ropes, block and tackle, and other equipment on the job. The other parts of the clock weren't so difficult to get into the tower, and "expert clock men" from the Howard Clock Co. soon had the clock working.

The ladies of the community saw the need for a public rest room for the country ladies passed through town on train or visiting town to trade and shop, and they formed the Rest Room Association in June 1901. They fixed up a basement room in the courthouse with chairs, cribs, rockers, and books, citing as one of the best amenities of the city in 1909 (Burrell 1909, Vol. 1: 358; Foster 1978: 35-36). In 1917, colored glass windows were removed with clear sanded glass installed in their place. The Washington Academy building at the southwest corner of Main Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue was converted for use by the public schools and then closed prior to the war with the construction of a new high school on Jefferson in 1918-1919, and the building was torn down in 1919. The clock was removed from the tower, and an effort was led by the Washington Improvement League to install it in the space reserved in the courthouse tower for a clock. In April 1920, the clock was installed in the courthouse tower (Foster 1978: 34).

In March 1966, the clock on the tower stopped, worn out. The money was raised for I.T. Verdin Company of Cincinnati (successor to Howard Clock Co) to install new clock works, gears, hands, controls. The tower was tuckpointed and trim painted in fall 1968. The clock mechanics were then installed, with faces and hands installed in March and the clock started on March 26, 1969 (Foster 1978: 34-35).

In 1974, the sheriff's office moved out of the courthouse to the new joint county-city communications building to the north.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

City/Telephone Directories, Washington. Various publishers, various dates. Available at the Washington Public Library.

Deed Records, Transfer Books, Auditor's Office, Washington County Courthouse, Washington, Iowa.

Newspaper advertisements, various years/dates, on microfilm at Washington Public Library:

*Washington Evening Journal*  
*Washington Gazette*  
*Washington Press*

Sanborn Map Company. "Washington, Iowa," Sanborn fire insurance maps. Pelham, NY: Sanborn Map Company, 1885, 1892, 1897, 1902, 1909, 1917, 1931, 1943.

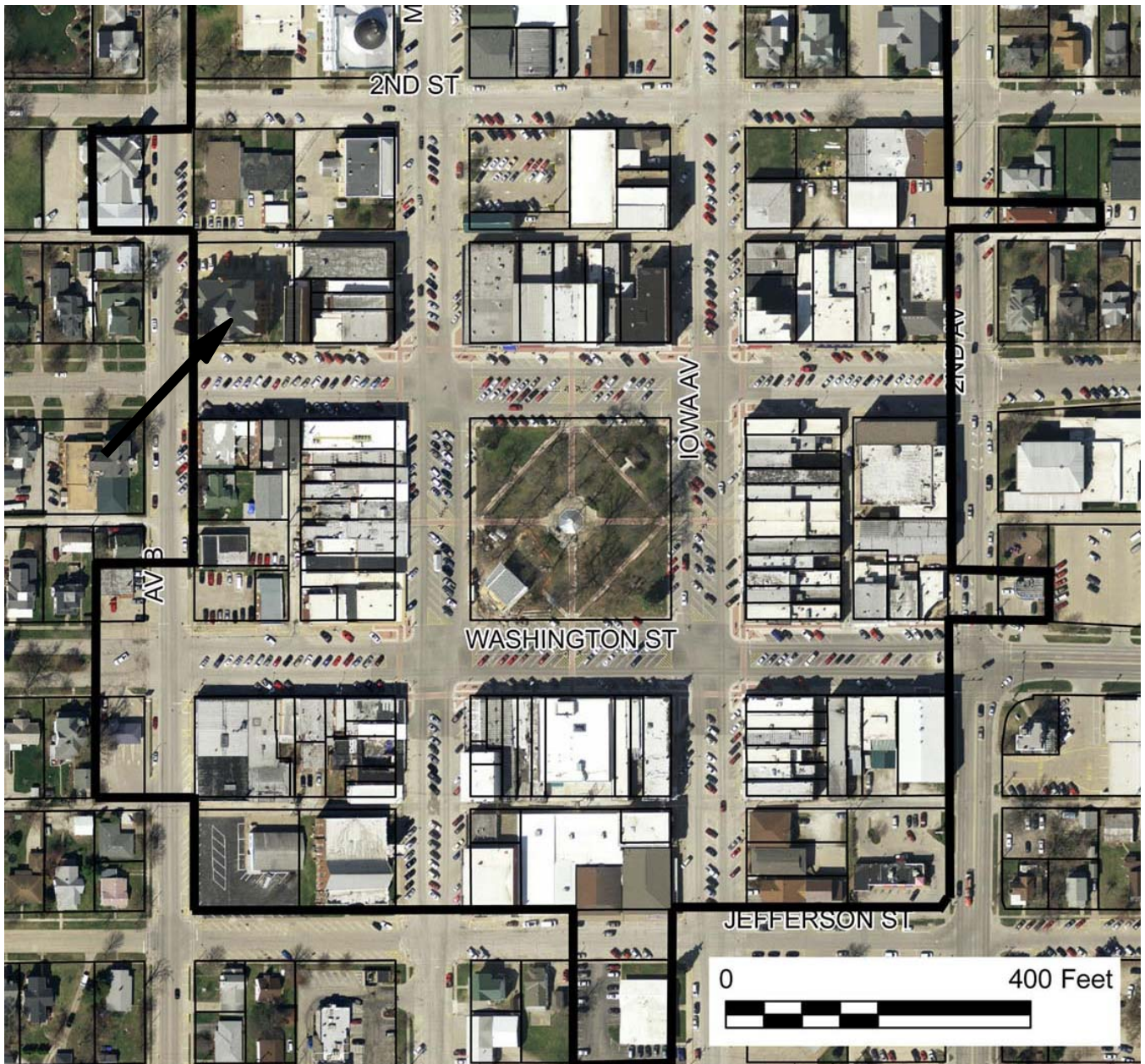
Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs  
State Historical Society of Iowa  
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Related District Number 92-00349

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**Location map**



*2009 aerial photograph (Washington County) – line indicates survey/research area boundary*

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Washington County Courthouse

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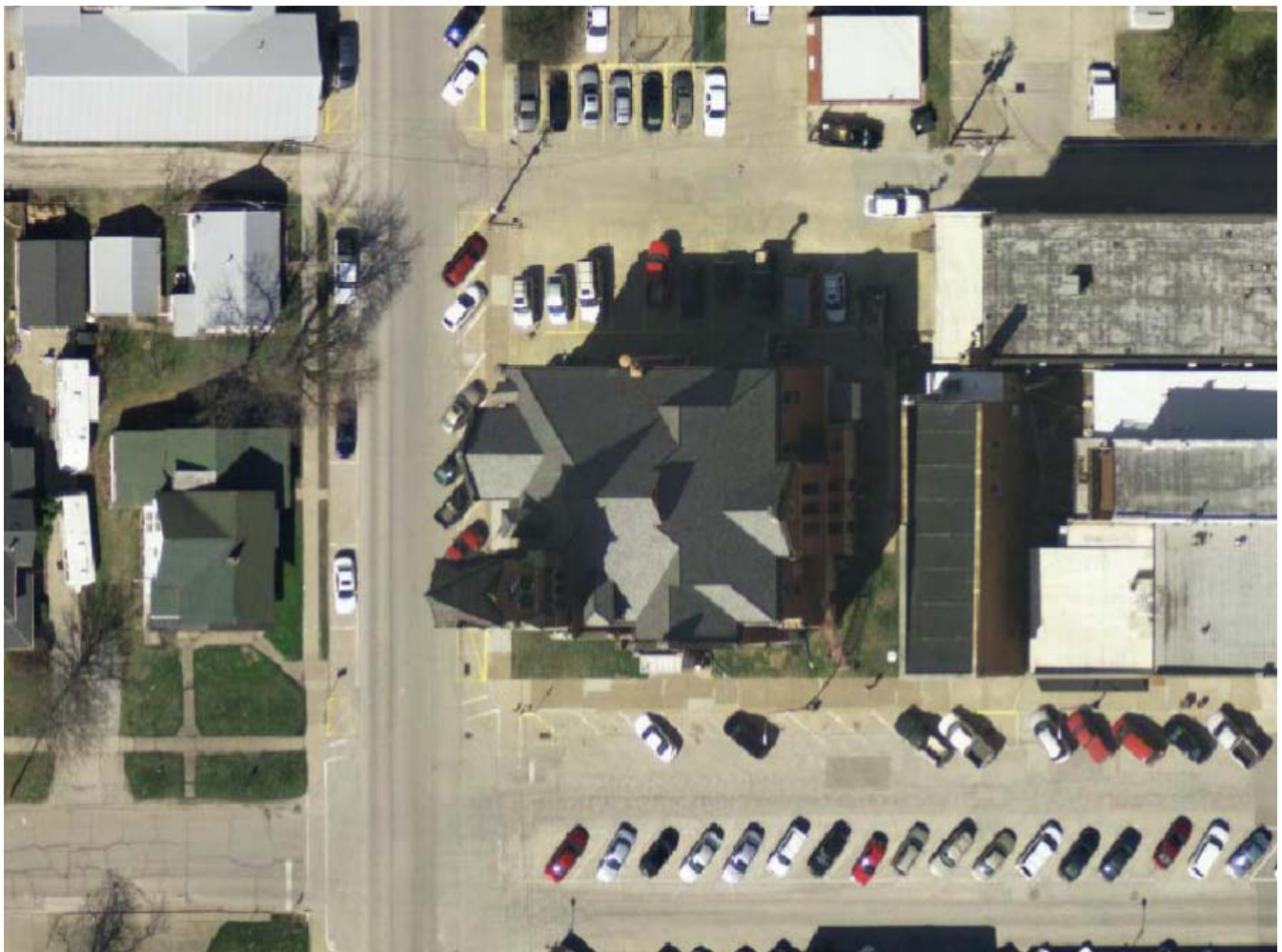
222 West Main Street

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## Building/site plan (from assessor's website)





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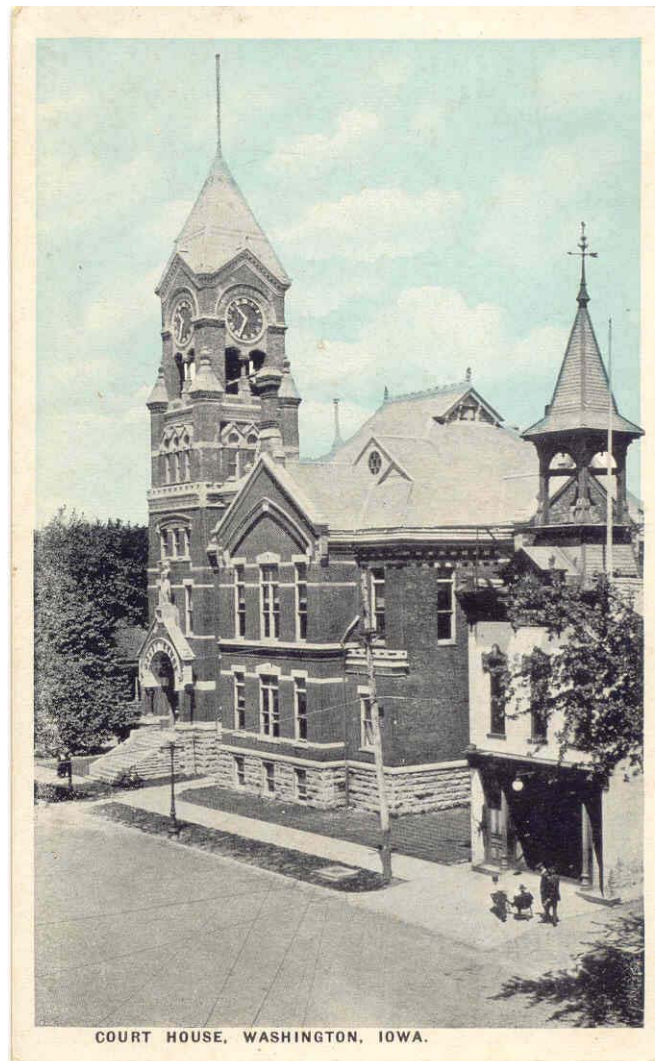
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## Historic images



Views of the Washington County Courthouse (and City Hall to right) from the 1920s (Patterson collection).

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## Digital photographs



Photograph 92-00150-001 - Courthouse, looking north-northeast (McCarley, September 20, 2011)

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Washington

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Photograph 92-00150-002 - Courthouse, looking east (McCarley, September 20, 2011)

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Photograph 92-00150-003 - Courthouse, looking northwest (McCarley, September 20, 2011)

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Photograph 92-00150-004 - Courthouse, looking south (McCarley, September 20, 2011)