



Preservation at Its Best Awards Nomination Form 2020

Award Category (**for Judging Purposes Only**, judges will decide which category best fits your project)

Adaptive Use

Commercial Large Commercial Small

Public Structure

Community Effort

Personal Residential Multi-Family Residential

Sustainability in Preservation

Rural Preservation

Special Projects (Book, Film, Website, etc)

Preservationist of the Year Award (A Person)

Property/Project Information:

Property/Project Name*: Winneshiek County Courthouse – Building Envelope and Safety Repairs; Master Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan

Property/Project Owner*: Winneshiek County Iowa

Property Address: 201 West Main Street

City, State, Zip: Decorah, Iowa 52101 Owners Phone: 563-382-5085

Owners Email: bsteines@co.winneshiek.ia.us Benjamin Steines, Auditor

Nominated By:

Name: Martin Gardner Architecture

Address: 700 11th Street, Suite 200

City, State, Zip: Marion, IA 52302 Nominator's Phone: 319-377-7604

Nominators Email: bethanyj@martingardnerarch.com

Photographs submitted: Attach no more than 8 pictures in addition with this nomination form and email to pib@preservationiowa.org.

(1) Copy of the nomination packet described in Award Guidelines should be submitted by email to: pib@preservationiowa.org. For larger files, we recommend sending them to the Preservation Iowa drop box account. Additional questions may be directed to Bruce Perry, Awards Ceremony Coordinator at 515 979 5620 or pib@preservationiowa.org.

EMAIL DEADLINE: Saturday, April 25, 2020

Our Mission is to build partnerships that enhance our economic and cultural future through the preservation of Iowa's historic resources.

*Denotes information to be used for award certificate.

PROJECT NARRATIVE

Start: July 21, 2017, End: January 16, 2019

The Winneshiek County Courthouse is a Beaux-Arts Classicism style building completed in 1904. The approximately 26,700 SF courthouse is a key contributing structure to the Broadway-Phelps Park Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The building remains relatively unaltered featuring ornate decorative plaster, art glass dome, terrazzo flooring with inlaid mosaic, carved wood reliefs, painted murals and marble wainscoting to list a few. The courthouse is a longstanding landmark – it represents the County, and Decorah, on emblems, logos and historic maps. It serves not only as a figurative landmark, but a visual landmark as one of the highest points within Decorah and the County. Often referred to as ‘Decorah’s Parthenon’ it is the go-to spot for graduation and wedding photos as well as a popular place for visitors.

Ongoing elusive water leaks had damaged areas of the ornate plaster in the rotunda and main courtroom over decades. Around 2015 a major roof leak caused significant damage in the main courtroom. It was patched shortly after but the roof was noted to be near the end of its life, so plans for replacement were made.

The project was undertaken in two phases. The first phase involved important building envelope and safety repairs - roof replacement, lightning protection system replacement, new color changing LED rooftop lighting, attic access walkways for safe inspection/access of the attic, new attic insulation, and an attic hatch for safe access to the roof. The lightning protection system was original to the building but was damaged and could no longer sufficiently protect the structure from lightning strikes. A new system that closely matched the historic was installed following the newly released Preservation Brief 50. This replacement was used as the primary case study for an educational session at the 2019 Preserve Iowa Summit called Lightning Protection – Old Fable or True Story?

While building envelope work like this is typically not visible to the public, the need to replace the non-functioning rooftop lighting created a unique opportunity to draw attention to the structure in a new way. Prior to this project the lights on the courthouse dome were not working for more than a decade. The County took the opportunity to install new color changing LED lighting to create awareness of the ongoing preservation of the courthouse and renew public interest in the courthouse itself while garnering support for future preservation projects.

The colored lighting created excitement from the moment it was turned on for testing. Local newspaper articles as well as social media posts from the public abounded. A handful of those posts are attached in the photos submitted. The County can program the lighting times and color schemes for different

occasions, holidays, and special events throughout the year allowing the ornate detailing of the structure to be viewed 24 hours a day.

The second phase involved the creation of a [Master Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan](#) to help identify, guide, and prioritize continued preservation, maintenance, and improvements to the building into the future. A primary outcome of the Plan is enabling proper stewardship by providing future County staff with the tools for proper maintenance and repair of the building.

The Preservation of a historic structure is important to understanding the heritage and values that helped found a community and speaks to where one finds themselves in present day. It helps us to plan and project what we desire our communities to be like in the future. This is even more important when dealing with a public structure. As the center of government, the courthouse borders Decorah's downtown commercial district and therefore speaks to not only the founding, planning, and plotting of the community itself but also to the establishment of Winneshiek County as a whole thereby contributing integrally the continued economic development of the community. Pursuing Preservation for the sake of Preservation is important, but it is more than simply saving an old building. By renewing public interest in the building and the contributions it makes to the community at large, the interest in historic preservation community-wide continues to grow.

Through this project, the Courthouse is once again a shining beacon representing Winneshiek County and the community of Decorah. Completion of vital building envelope repairs allows further implementation of the Master Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan and allows the structure to continue serving as the center of government for generations to come.

This project was funded by Winneshiek County.