

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received JUL 18 1985  
date entered AUG 15 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Lac qui Parle County Courthouse

and or common N/A

**2. Location**

street & number 600 Sixth Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Madison

N/A vicinity of

state Minnesota

code 22

county Lac qui Parle

code 073

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Lac qui Parle County

street & number 600 Sixth Street

city, town Madison

N/A vicinity of

state Minnesota 56256

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Lac qui Parle County Courthouse

street & number 600 Sixth Street

city, town Madison

state Minnesota 56256

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Minnesota Statewide Historic Sites Survey

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1983-84

federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office, Fort Snelling History Center

city, town St. Paul

state Minnesota 55111

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____ N/A
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

21 am

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Lac Qui Parle County Courthouse is located at the intersection of Sixth Street and Sixth Avenue in Madison, Minnesota. It is situated at the head of Madison's main commercial street, north of the Madison Carnegie Library (1905-06), the Madison City Hall (1903), and several large Victorian houses. The courthouse sits on a large park-like lawn with a circular sidewalk and ornamental flower beds. A one story, detached red brick jail constructed circa 1964 stands west of the courthouse and there is a small parking lot at the rear.

Built in 1899, the Lac Qui Parle County Courthouse is the county's largest and most ornate turn of the century building and is a fine example of Victorian Romanesque architecture. The courthouse was designed by St. Paul architects Buechner and Jacobson and is very similar to the firm's Douglas County Courthouse in Alexandria, which was constructed in 1894-95. The Lac Qui Parle County Courthouse was built by St. Paul contractor Olaf Swenson at an estimated cost of \$31,000. The building has a symmetrical, nine bay facade and a hipped roof covered with asphalt shingles. It is faced with stretcher bonded Twin City red pressed brick, with smoothly dressed red Lake Superior stone trim and a foundation of rockfaced brownstone and local fieldstone. The building's design is dominated by a central four story square entrance tower with a steeply pitched hipped roof covered with slate tiles. The top of the tower features small brick gables and projecting corner pinnacles and stone composite columns forming tall, narrow rounded arched openings on the west, south, and east facades. The main facade of the building has regularly spaced rectangular window openings on the first story, rounded arched window openings on the second story, projecting gables at the outer bays, and small gabled roof wall dormers above the third and seventh bays. Most windows are 1/1 sash with transoms. The entrance to the building, which consists of a set of double leaf wooden doors with sidelights and transoms, is recessed within a large brick rounded arched with foliated stone springing blocks. There is a stone banner incised with the words "Court House" above the entrance.

The west, east, and north facades of the building are similar in design to the main facade. There are small entrances on the west and north facades and an interior endwall chimney on the west facade. The building is ornamented with smooth stone sills, lintels, beltcourses, raised brick arches with foliated springing blocks, and a metal corbelled cornice. The courthouse contains nine offices and four fireproof vaults on the first floor, six offices and a courtroom on the second floor, and a heating plant, repair shop, restrooms, and storage rooms in the basement. The interior has a main corridor with a quarry tile floor, oak woodwork with architrave moldings, and an open stairway with square oak newel posts and turned balusters.

The Lac Qui Parle County Courthouse is intact and in good condition. The only apparent alterations to the building have been replacing the original slate roof with an asphalt shingle roof and remodelling some interior offices and the second floor courtroom with wood panelling and new ceilings.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1899 **Builder/Architect** Buechner and Jacobson, architect  
Olaf Swenson, builder

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Lac Qui Parle County Courthouse, built in 1899 in Madison, is architecturally and historically significant as Lac Qui Parle County's largest and most impressive Victorian building, as one of outstate Minnesota's finite number of unaltered monumental Victorian courthouses, and as an example of the work of accomplished St. Paul architects Buechner and Jacobson. Furthermore, the building is historically important as the culmination of a seventeen year battle over the establishment of the Lac Qui Parle County Seat, a dispute which resulted in the placement of the seat in Madison thereby assuring the community's growth to become the center of county governmental affairs.

Lac Qui Parle County was established by the Minnesota Legislature in 1871. A brief county seat dispute began almost immediately between the residents of two tiny settlements, Williamsburg (now completely extinct) and Lac Qui Parle Village, a small community near the Minnesota River which was the site of the Lac Qui Parle Mission from 1835-62, was vacated during the Dakota War of 1862, and which became the county's first permanently settled community circa 1868. In 1871 the first Board of County Commissioners was elected from contenders representing both Williamsburg and Lac Qui Parle Village. The resulting board favored the Village, and at the board's first meeting in January of 1872 the county seat was placed at Lac Qui Parle Village. County business was conducted in leased quarters from 1872-1883 when a \$1,000 woodframe courthouse was completed. Lac Qui Parle Village flourished during these years, becoming the county's largest community.

In 1884, one year after the courthouse was completed, the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railroad was constructed through the county, bypassing Lac Qui Parle Village and effectively ending the community's chances for further growth. The towns of Dawson and Madison, both platted in 1884 along the railroad's new route, started a second county seat battle in April of 1885 when residents of each community petitioned the county board for the relocation of the county seat to their respective towns. During the year and a half before the general election held in November of 1886 to decide the question, the Dawson Sentinel and the Madison Press and members of the business communities of both towns waged an editorial battle on this and other rivalry issues which continued until the turn of the century. Voters chose Madison as the county seat on November 5, 1886, but when the decision was announced a county officer in Dawson issued an injunction against moving any of the county records to Madison. The controversy climaxed on November 12, 1886 when 150 men with forty teams of horses violated the injunction by riding to the Village, seizing the legal records, and physically dragging the courthouse fourteen miles to Madison (a process which took nearly a week due to bad weather). The courthouse was placed on the present site, land which had been previously offered for this purpose by the Madison Townsite Company in an effort to influence voters to choose Madison as the seat.

Further legal battles followed until September of 1887 when the Minnesota Supreme Court declared an existing county seat removal law to be unconstitutional, and the county records were moved back to Lac Qui Parle Village by court order. Undaunted, citizens of Madison then worked to elected local politician J. F. Jacobson to the Minnesota Legislature to achieve further action in their favor. Jacobson was elected in November of 1888 and

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

"Lac Qui Parle County 100th Year Centennial Edition." Madison Independent Press and Dawson Sentinel, June 29, 1972.  
 Willand, Jon. Unpublished manuscript on Lac Qui Parle County history. Jon Willand, 145 Malcolm Ave. S.E., Minneapolis, Minnesota.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Madison Quad.

Quadrangle scale 7.5

### UTM References

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 Zone Easting Northing

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

Block 10, Original Townsite of Madison.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Granger, Field Assistant  
State Historic Preservation Office

organization Minnesota Historical Society date April 1984

street & number Fort Snelling History Center telephone (612) 726-1171

city or town St. Paul state Minnesota 55111

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Russell W. Fridley*

title Russell W. Fridley  
State Historic Preservation Officer

date 6/26/85

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

**Entered in the  
National Register**

date 8-15-85

*for Melores Byer*  
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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date entered

Continuation sheet Lac Qui Parle County Courthouse Item number 8,9

Page 1

Item #8 (Significance) continued:

succeeded in steering a new county seat bill through the legislature. Finally, on May 21, 1889, a special countywide election was held and Madison was formally named the county seat.

Plans to construct the present courthouse in Madison began in the early 1890's, amid continuing controversy over the issue which complicated the approval of over \$30,000 in bonds for the construction of the building. In December of 1898 the county commissioners reviewed plans submitted by three architects, eventually choosing the firm of Buechner and Jacobson of St. Paul and selecting a design very similar to the firm's recently completed Douglas County Courthouse in Alexandria. In April of 1899 the contract for construction was awarded to bidder Olaf Swenson of St. Paul. The cornerstone was laid at a ceremony on June 21, 1899 (an invitation to which the still upset Township of Maxwell returned with the note "Lay your own cornerstone!").\* The Lac Qui Parle County Courthouse was completed finally in November of 1899. The 1883 woodframe courthouse which had been moved from Lac Qui Parle Village, was sold to a private party and eventually split into two residences, one of which still stands at 514 Seventh Avenue in Madison.

Buechner and Jacobson, the firm that designed the Lac Qui Parle County Courthouse, formed a partnership in St. Paul in 1889. They became one of the state's leading architectural firms at the turn of the century and were awarded commissions for county courthouses in Swift County (1889, on the National Register), Kanabec County (1894, on the National Register), Douglas County (1894-95), and Lac Qui Parle County (1899), as well as for a number of schools, houses, commercial buildings, and other structures throughout the state. After Jacobson's death in 1902 Charles Buechner formed a partnership with Henry Orth which lasted until Buechner's death in 1924. Buechner and Orth continued to design public buildings across the state, including the Goodhue, Jackson, Ottertail, and Wilkin County Courthouses, all of which have been placed on the National Register.

\*As quoted by Jon Willand in his unpublished manuscript on the history of Lac Qui Parle County, Minneapolis, Minnesota.