

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

For HCRS use only

received **AUG 11 1982**

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Fontanelle Township Hall

and/or common Fontanelle Township Hall (WN04-1)

2. Location

street & number N/A off NE 91 N/A not for publication

city, town Fontanelle N/A vicinity of Second congressional district

state Nebraska code 031 county Washington code 177

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Marianne K. Simmons

street & number 525 West 19th Street

city, town Fremont N/A vicinity of Nebraska state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Clerk, Washington County Courthouse

street & number N/A

city, town Blair Nebraska state

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date On-going federal state county local

depository for survey records Nebraska State Historical Society

city, town Lincoln Nebraska state

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Fontanelle Township Hall is located in the unincorporated village of Fontanelle, a community on the western border of Washington County overlooking the Elkhorn River.

The hall is a one-story, two-bay, 27 x 19 foot brick structure. The gable roof is covered with wooden shingles, and the entrance is located on the gable end. The Eastlake porch across the front (west) is decorated with turned posts and brackets. There are two windows at the rear and one each on the other sides; all are double-hung with two-over-two panes. A centered interior chimney is located at the rear.

On the interior, the one-room is divided in half by a low railing (see photos #4, #5, and #6). Polling booths are located along the east wall. An old heating stove remains centered on that wall. Wooden tongue-in-groove wainscoting is placed on all four walls. The original furnishing of chairs, table, and desk remain in the hall; the law books and voting records date to 1894.

The hall was purchased from the township by the present owner in 1975 to insure its preservation. It is maintained in its original state, and is opened occasionally to the public for special tours.

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1896 **Builder/Architect** H. J. Carpenter, overseer

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Fontanelle Township Hall is a well-preserved example of a somewhat uncommon building type in Nebraska: the township meeting hall. These halls were the product of a particular type of county organization. A minority of Nebraska counties were organized by township. The township organization instituted local control of certain phases of government work, and is therefore significant to the governmental history of the state.

In 1883 a law passed the Nebraska Legislature authorizing the organization of townships as governmental units, after voter approval at the county level (Laws of Nebraska, 1-83, pp. 202-217). This allowed rural residents a direct voice in decisions at the local level. Previously, decisions on rural matters were made by the county government. The 1883 law gave certain governing and taxing powers to the township government. Through annual town meetings, direct democracy was practiced. At the annual meetings, the voters made rules and policies, elected a town board and their county supervisor, set taxes, and made decisions on work to be done in the coming year on specifically authorized projects, such as roads, bridges, support of the poor, public wells, trees along highways, fire protection, etc.

Washington County adopted this law the same year, and five townships were organized in the next twelve months. The Fontanelle voters held their first annual meeting on April 1st, 1884. The meetings were held in the schoolhouse, and five voters constituted a quorum. In 1896 the voters approved the construction of a town hall. A number of township men assisted in the construction of the building, and H. J. Carpenter, a prominent local farmer, was paid thirty dollars for overseeing the work. The total cost of construction, lot purchase, and printing was \$563.35 (Fontanelle Township Minutes, n.d., 1896).

The interior clearly reflects the uses of the building: meeting hall and polling place. Half of the room provides seating for voters at the annual meeting. The other half houses polling booths, desk, and table for the annual meeting, quarterly meetings of the board, and voting.

Few other township halls have been identified in the Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey to date. Only twenty-eight of Nebraska's 93 counties have adopted the township organization. In township counties, most meetings were probably held in schoolhouses or other available rooms. This may account for the resemblance to one-room schoolhouses. Of the three other known halls, all are similar to Fontanelle's (one room, gable roof, front porch, and entrance at the gable end), although they are of frame construction. The Fontanelle Township Hall is particularly well-preserved, and is the only known example in brick.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Nickerson, NE

UMT References

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

A	<u>1</u> <u>4</u>	<u>7</u> <u>1</u> <u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u> <u>1</u> <u>4</u> <u>1</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

D			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

E			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

F			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

G			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

H			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal boundary description and justification

South 78 feet of the west 40 feet of Lot 3, Block 77 of Fontanelle Town Plat, Washington County, Nebraska, including all of the historically associated real estate.

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

state	code	county	code
N/A			

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Penelope Chatfield, Preservation Historian

organization Nebraska State Historical Society date March, 1981

street & number 1500 R Street telephone 402/471-3850

city or town Lincoln state Nebraska

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Murray O. Smith date 8-1-82 (cont. from letter)

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

For HCRS use only

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

Melona Byers Keoper of the National Register Entered in the National Register date 9/9/82

Attest: Chief of Registration date

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET Bibliography ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

Andreas, A. T. The History of the State of Nebraska. Chicago: Western Historical Co., 1882, pp. 1470-1471.

Buss, Rev. William H. and Thomas T. Osterman, editors. History of Dodge and Washington Counties, Nebraska. Chicago: American Historical Society, 1921.

Laws of Nebraska, 1883. Lincoln: Journal Co., 1883.

Minutes of Fontanelle Township Board and Annual Meetings, Washington County, Nebraska, 1884-1907. MS. Filed at the State Archives, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Nebraska Blue Book, 1978-79. Lincoln: Nebraska Legislative Council, 1979, p. 592.

Simmons, Ray C., information supplied on Historical Sites Survey Form, August, 1978.