

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

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

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

1. Name

historic Oneida County Courthouse

and/or common

2. Location

street & number South Oneida Avenue, east side of, off the east
end of East Davenport Street ___ not for publication

city, town Rhinelander ___ vicinity of congressional district Seventh

state Wisconsin code 55 county Oneida code 085

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 type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input 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	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" 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 Oneida County (Dorothy Neal, County Clerk)

street & number Oneida County Courthouse

city, town Rhinelander ___ vicinity of state Wisconsin 54501

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds Office

street & number Oneida County Courthouse

city, town Rhinelander state Wisconsin 54501

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes no

date 1976 ___ federal state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records Historic Preservation Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

city, town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Oneida County Courthouse is a local landmark, visible for miles on the relatively flat land of Rhinelander and its vicinity. It is located west of center in the courthouse square, which is bounded by S. Oneida Avenue, Court Park, S. Baird Avenue, and Dahl Street. The main courthouse facade faces due west down Davenport Street, which commences at Oneida Avenue. Thus, the courthouse serves as the visual termination of the east end of Davenport Street, on which is located the National Register-listed First National Bank, two blocks west (see photograph).

The 1908 courthouse is a gray limestone ashlar three-story Neo-Classical building with an octagonal, stained-glass, lantern dome, which becomes an internally-illuminated, greenish beacon at night. This dome is virtually identical to that on the 1902 Grant County Courthouse, Lancaster, which was listed in the National Register in 1978. (The building itself, however, is not at all similar to the Grant County example, which was executed by a different architect. Because the buildings are dissimilar and designed by different architects, it is probable the domes were standard items ordered from the same supplier.) The architect of the Oneida courthouse, Christ H. Tegen, also designed the Manitowoc County Courthouse, built in 1906. The latter is a larger and more elaborate structure, but the main block of the building closely resembles the Rhinelander building. A lantern dome atop the Manitowoc building appears to have once resembled the Lancaster and Rhinelander domes, but has been altered and painted.

The main (west) facade of the Oneida County Courthouse is symmetrical, and has a two-story, tetrastyle, colossal Ionic colonade on center in the second and third stories. The first story is a rusticated ashlar limestone base with semi-circular, arched openings. The columns rest on a heavy console table above the main entrance. A simple, denticulated cornice surrounds the building. The second and third story windows are enclosed by flat lintels and simplified Gibbs surrounds.

The north and south facades are identical, and resemble the west facade except that they have tetrastyle, colossal Ionic pedimented porticos with engaged columns. The rear (east) facade was extremely simple, but is now partially covered by a central elevator tower and a two-story, modern buff-brick addition projecting eastward, "T"-shaped in plan, that houses sheriff's offices and county jail. This addition is utterly devoid of architectural distinction with plain, rectangular window and door openings and a flat roof. It is industrial in character and was built with low cost clearly being the primary design criterion. Fortunately, this addition is relatively small compared to the courthouse and is as inconspicuously sited as possible.

The interior of the courthouse is simple and recognizable to those familiar with small county courthouses. It is a three-story light well surrounded by a doughnut of county offices and, on the third floor, the circuit court and its related offices. A circular, stained-glass skylight has been covered over and no longer admits light to the well, unlike similar skylights in the Grant County Courthouse (which has clear glass) and the Lafayette County Courthouse (which has spectacular stained glass). The skylight appears to be intact, however, leaving open the possible future restoration of light passing through it.

(continued)

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7. DESCRIPTION (continued)

The orders of columns, pilasters, and piers surrounding the well change in classical sequence from floor to floor: Doric on the first, Ionic on the second, and Corinthian on the third. Great piers at each corner of the well are faced with pilasters in the appropriate orders on the lower two floors. At the third floor, squinches spring to arch the four well openings and support the circular skylight. Spandrel panels are decorated with four identical mosaics depicting eagles perched before stars-and-stripes shields. Column and pilaster capitals are painted in gold leaf throughout the interior, and a few geometric, blue stencils may still be found below third-floor capitals. The general paint scheme of the interior employs institutional greens and yellows of recent vintage.

The third-floor, east stairhall contains two murals dated 1919 and painted by "F. Biberstein" on facing walls. One depicts a lumberman rolling on and directing floating logs. The other is a romanticized vision of three Indians drying and stretching skins before their teepees (even though bent-sapling wigwams were used in Wisconsin) by a rapids-strewn river, along which rests a dugout canoe. Across the light well, on the west wall, is a small mural depicting a "Hodag," a mythical monster of local legend that is heavily promoted by the local chamber of commerce with tongue planted firmly in cheek.

As is common around small courthouses, the grounds in the square contain a marker and memorials. Southwest of the main entrance is a marble memorial to war dead from Oneida County from several wars. To the right side of the entrance walkway is a small 1935 plaque mounted by the Oneida County Historical Society on a concrete base memorializing "Oneida County Early Pioneers." A 1969 Wisconsin historical marker across the walk describes the 1933 Oneida County Zoning Ordinance as the first comprehensive rural zoning ordinance enacted in the United States.

The courthouse square is surrounded predominantly by small, two-story frame houses, some of which have been converted to attorneys' offices. These houses are generally late-nineteenth-century, picturesque buildings of modest architectural pretensions.

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 type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1908 (cornerstone) **Builder/Architect** Christ H. Tegen, Manitowoc¹

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Oneida County Courthouse is significant in the architectural history of Wisconsin in that it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a period of construction and represents the work of an historic architect.

Architecture

The courthouse building is an excellent and locally-unequaled example of Neo-Classical Revival architecture. Its prominent location in Rhinelander also makes it the most dominant local building, primarily because the axis of East Davenport Street visually terminates on its dome and west facade. Moreover, the stained-glass dome, which is virtually-identical to that on the Grant County Courthouse (NRHP) and is similar to Manitowoc County Courthouse dome, is unusual among Wisconsin buildings as a Beaux Arts interpretation of Renaissance prototype.

The architect for the building was Christ H. Tegen,¹ a historically prominent Manitowoc architect little known outside the city. He was born in 1856 in Hamburg, Germany, and immigrated to the United States in 1883. He was educated at the Polytechnic School in Hamburg, and was said to have "designed many of the largest and most beautiful buildings in the city"² of Manitowoc. Most prominent of these buildings was the Manitowoc County Courthouse (1906), which is a Neo-Classical building with an octagonal, stained-glass dome. Also standing in his Dempsey Block, 102-108 North Eighth Street, Manitowoc, a white-tile commercial building with fluted pilasters, a classical cornice, and Ionic engaged entry columns. Records are not known currently that attribute other standing buildings authoritatively to Tegen. Tegen's son, Robert F. Tegen, practiced architecture in the state of Oregon.

Tegen was selected to be the architect as the result of architectural competition held by the Oneida County Board of Supervisors during the winter of 1907-1908.³ Proposals were solicited from seventeen architects. The cornerstone was laid in November 1908,⁴ though the bulk of construction was begun in the spring of 1909 and completed in 1910.

Rhinelander, formerly Pelican Rapids, was named the seat of the New Oneida County in 1885. A two-story frame courthouse was constructed in 1887 on the present courthouse square.⁵ This courthouse building was moved off the site in 1908 to make way for the Tegen courthouse building. Two outbuildings on the site were removed much later to permit the construction of the rear, brick sheriff's addition.

¹Falge, p. 98. Rhinelander News, April 8, 1908 (and other issues). Tegen's name was spelled variously Tegan and Teagan. City directories and Falge agree on "Tegen," however.

²Falge, p. 98.

³Rhinelander News, April 8, 1908.

⁴Rhinelander News, August 26, 1910.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Falge, Louis, Ed. History of Manitowoc County. Chicago: Goodspeed Historical Assoc., c. 1912. Vol. 2, p. 98; biographical data on Christ H. Tegen,
 Jones, George, Norman McVean, et al. History of Lincoln, Oneida, and Vilas Counties, Wis. Minneapolis: H. C. Cooper, 1924.
Rhineland News: 1/1/08, 4/8/08, 4/15/08, 11/11/09, 8/26/10.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 2.98 (129,600 sq. ft.)

Quadrangle name Rhineland, Wisconsin

UMT References

A

1	6	3	1	2	3	8	0	5	0	5	6	3	9	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

C

Zone				Easting				Northing						

E

Zone				Easting				Northing						

G

Zone				Easting				Northing						

B

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D

Zone				Easting				Northing						

F

Zone				Easting				Northing						

H

Zone				Easting				Northing						

UTM NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle scale 1:62,500

Date: 19-6 15' Series

(7 1/2' unavailable)

Verbal boundary description and justification

The courthouse square; bounded on the west by the east right-of-way (r.o.w.) line of S. Oneida Avenue, on the south by the north r.o.w. of Court Park, on the east by the west r.o.w. of Baird Avenue, and on the north by the south r.o.w. of Dahl Street.

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

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jeff Dean, Director of Historic Preservation

Historic Preservation Division

organization State Historical Society of Wisconsin date July 10, 1980

street & number 816 State Street telephone 608/262-1339

city or town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

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 Richard A. Erney

Richard A. Erney

title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin date 2/2/81

For HCERS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<u>[Signature]</u>	date <u>3/26/80</u>
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest: <u>[Signature]</u>	date <u>3/16/81</u>
Chief of Registration	

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FORM PREPARED BY

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