

PHO 368601

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED NOV 2 1976

DATE ENTERED SEP 15 1977

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 Wells County Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Railway Street North (Post Office Box 125)

CITY, TOWN

Fessenden

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1

STATE

North Dakota

CODE

38

COUNTY

Wells

CODE

103

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" 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 Wells County

STREET & NUMBER

Railway Street North (Post Office Box 125)

CITY, TOWN

Fessenden

VICINITY OF

STATE

North Dakota 58438

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Wells County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Railway Street North (Post Office Box 125)

CITY, TOWN

Fessenden

STATE

North Dakota 58438

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE North Dakota Historic Sites Survey

DATE

1976

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS State Historical Society of North Dakota
Liberty Memorial Building

CITY, TOWN

Bismarck

STATE

North Dakota 58505

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Two stories high, with full attic and raised basement, the Wells County Courthouse measures approximately 56 by 74 feet. The walls of the fieldstone and mortar foundation are battered, and the two main stories, brick laid in common bond, are defined by water table, string course, and iron anchor bolts at the line of the rafter plate. The multiple roof volumes, originally outlined by notched ridge rolls simulating miniature battlements, are hipped or gabled, with one of each type giving emphasis to the facade (northwest elevation). On the west end is an outsized hipped-roof dormer with half-timbered type facing, and on the north is a gable with clapboarded pediment centered with the legend Wells Co. Courthouse 1895 and a band of five 4-light windows.

Other fenestration in the building consists mainly of replacement 1 over 1 aluminum sash set in wood casings and topped by brick segmental arches. On the second floor the latter feature is elaborated into hood molds which extend horizontally to connect the windows in decorative banding. The most ornate use of brickwork, however, is on the southwest and northeast elevations in the pairs of projecting, paneled chimneys joined high above the roofline by corbeled parapet gables. Because of deterioration the bolster-shaped chimney heads were removed, thus shortening the stacks and diminishing somewhat the picturesque configuration of the building. Its potential in that regard was also curtailed at the time of construction, when a tall tower with cut-shingle base and truncated pyramidal roof with balustrade and flagpole, shown in the original plans, was eliminated. The tower would have been aligned above the semicircular stair turret which was executed on the facade. The basement and main levels of the turret correspond to the adjoining wall material (stone and brick), but the second story is matched white boarding beneath a shallow, conical roof. A small storage facility has been attached to each elevation of the building, the first occurring in 1925, and at the south corner of the rear elevation, near the basement entrance, is a cast-iron, hand-operated water pump.

The grounds of the courthouse were plowed in the spring of 1905, at which time the trees which today obscure the lines of the building were planted. A dense hedge also partially surrounds the property, and a curving, graveled driveway to the front entrance replaces an earlier walkway. The entrance itself has been altered, with cheekblocks in place of the balustrades once flanking the concrete steps which wrap around the west corner of the building. Also, the two large entry arches with brick keystones, imposts, and rounded archivolt on the northwest elevation have been boarded over, leaving a single identical one on the southwest elevation to provide access through a covered porch to the building.

The interior of the first floor has offices for the county judge, treasurer, auditor, and register of deeds, as well as the clerk of district court and the Veterans' Administration representative, all opening off a T-shaped hallway. Walls and ceiling in the latter are plaster, while in most of the offices these surfaces are sheathed in ornately patterned stamped metal. Doors have paneled bases beneath glass upper sections and are set in framings with transoms, curvilinear corner blocks, and striated side casings. The stairway is a half-turn with semicircular landings (corresponding to the facade turret) and has grooved newel posts and turned balusters built directly into the molded stringer.

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The second floor contains the courtroom, which features plaster walls and ceiling; lawyers' railing with turned balusters and newels; jury box with early models of swivel armchairs upholstered in brown leather; and a carved and paneled judge's bench. Southeast of the courtroom are three small anterooms, and nearby are offices of the state's attorney and the county superintendent of public schools. The attic is reached by an enclosed stairway on the southwest wall of the courtroom, and there is a service stair connecting basement, first, and second floors at the southeast end of the building.

The basement houses the jail and living quarters for the county sheriff, and its early appearance has been remarkably preserved, with decorative stamped metal interiors even in the cell blocks. Despite the overall retention of original layout and finish throughout the building, there have been certain modernizations over the years. The heating system, at first dependent on six hard coal burners, was eventually converted from steam to oil; water and sewer services were installed in 1923; and rewiring was completed in 1969.

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 checked="" 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 1895

BUILDER/ARCHITECT John W. Ross

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Wells County Courthouse, a major public building dating from North Dakota's formative period of statehood, contains the administrative and judicial offices of the county. The structure is stylistically significant for its Queen Anne design, and particularly so as an uncommon example in the state of the "urban" expression of that mode: brick fabric, with soaring, parapeted chimneys. The original plans by John W. Ross of Grand Forks, North Dakota, are preserved in a vault in the county auditor's office. Ross (1848-1914), born in Germany and reared and educated in Sauk Center, Minnesota, was employed for a time in the architectural office of his brother in LaCrosse, Wisconsin. He later engaged in the contracting business, and after coming to Grand Forks in 1880, he resumed the practice of architecture. He was commissioned for the Wells County Courthouse after a \$12,000 bond issue was passed by voters in May, 1895.

Wells County is located in the grain belt of central North Dakota and is also one of the leading stock-raising and diversified farming counties in the state. Created in 1873 by the territorial legislature, it was first named Gingras County after Antoine Blanc Gingras (1821-1877), a wealthy trader of French and Chippewa Indian parentage residing in the Pembina district. In 1881 the name was changed to Wells County in honor of Edward P. Wells (b. 1847), banker, railroad builder, and territorial legislator from Jamestown. The original county seat was at Sykeston but was removed to the more centrally located Fessenden in 1894 after towns had developed northwestward along the Minneapolis, St. Paul and Sault Ste Marie Railway (Soo Line). Shortly afterward, when plans for the new courthouse came under consideration, a stone fabric for the building was first favored, but more economical brick and frame construction was ultimately chosen. Lumber was obtained from W.E. Cooke, a dealer in nearby Harvey, and the brick was manufactured by the H.T. Von Wagoner Company in Minot. Others involved in the project were as follows:

- H.B. Chess, builder contractor
- D. McDonald, superintendent of construction
- E.A. Folendorf and John Swanson, basement excavation
- E.J. Makinson, head bricklayer
- Joe Buck, lathing
- W.M. Cahill, plastering
- George A. Herald, furnishings

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Maddox, Dawn. Personal inspection, August 3, 1976.
 Spokesfield, Walter E. The History of Wells County and Its Pioneers. North Dakota, 1929.
 Wells County Courthouse, Office of the County Auditor. Original plans by John W. Ross.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .9 acre

UTM REFERENCES not available because blue UTM grid tick marks not included on USGS map.

OK Longitude: 99° 37' 28.8" ⁷⁹ Latitude: 47° 38' 56.3" ⁵⁶

A	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	B	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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	Dawn Maddox, Architectural Historian		
ORGANIZATION	State Historical Society of North Dakota	DATE	October 25, 1976
STREET & NUMBER	Liberty Memorial Building	TELEPHONE	(701)224-2666
CITY OR TOWN	Bismarck	STATE	North Dakota 58505

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE X LOCAL X

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

James E. Sherry

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE October 27, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
DIRECTOR OF BUREAU OF HISTORIC AND MONUMENTS PRESERVATION	DATE 9/18/77
ATTEST: <i>Mark Adams</i>	KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	DATE 7-15-77

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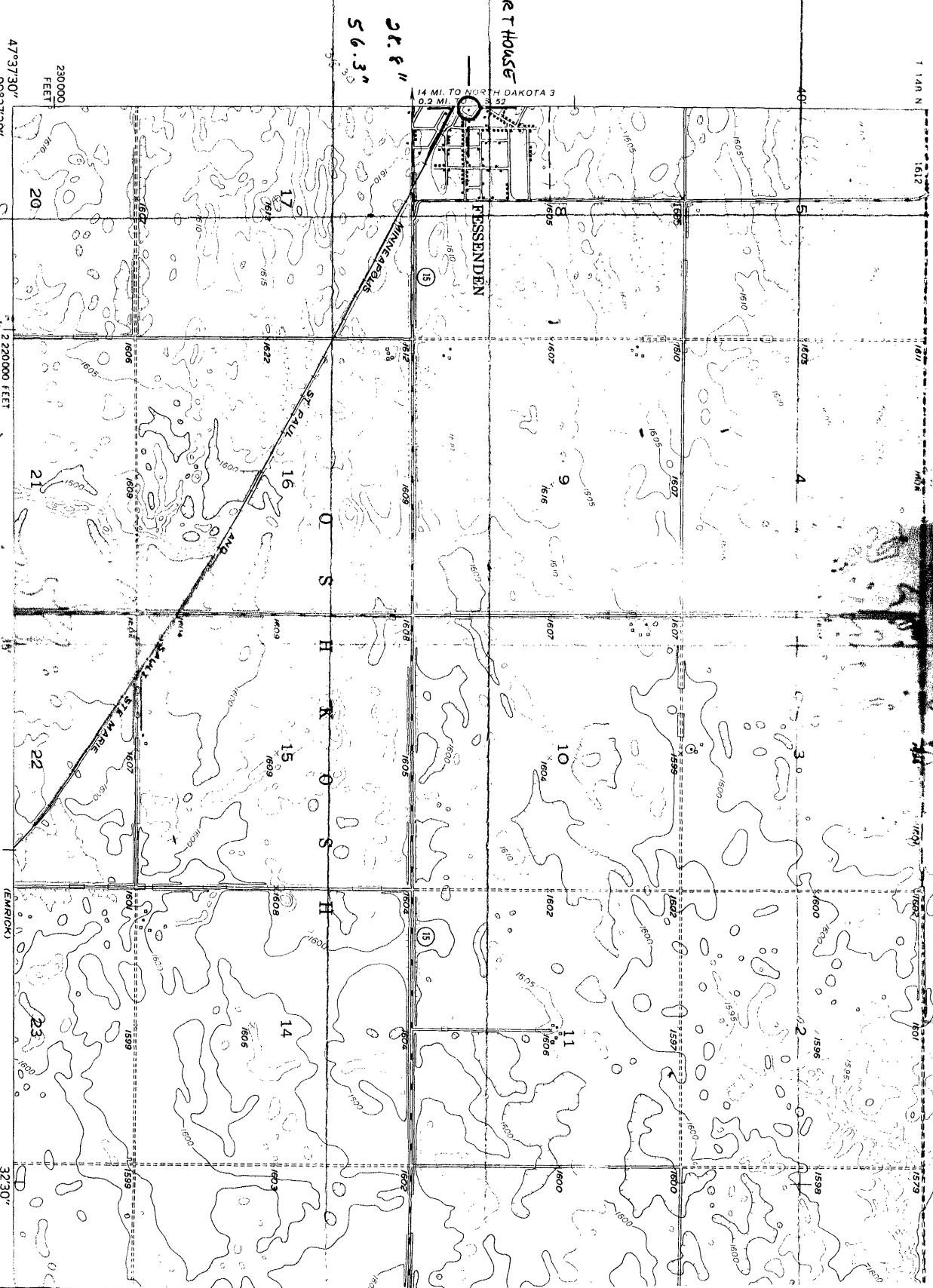
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The \$19,000 building was ready for occupancy by county officers on January 1, 1896, having been the scene the night before of a New Year's Eve ball. Special trains for the latter occasion were operated by the Soo Line from Harvey as well as Carrington in adjoining Foster County, bringing hundreds of guests to celebrate in the brilliantly lit courtroom decorated with spruce trees, flags, and bunting. The local newspaper editor, Warren A. Stickley, led the grand march with Miss Emma Poole, station agent for the Northern Pacific Railway at Carrington, after which supper was served by proprietor John Foos at his hotel across the street from the courthouse. On January 11, 1896, former Lieutenant-Governor John H. Worst, president of the North Dakota Agricultural College (now North Dakota State University, Fargo) delivered a dedicatory address in the courtroom on the subject, "The Pupil of Today, the Citizen of the Future."

In the eighty years since its construction, the courthouse has served continuously as the source of government in Wells County. Recently, however, there has been speculation that the needs of the county could be better served in a new courthouse located in a new county seat (Harvey). In response to the implied threat to the present courthouse, concerned citizens have initiated action to publicize its role as depository and embodiment of county history, and its potential for adaptation to meet present and future operational requirements of county governmental agencies.

WELLS COUNTY COURTHOUSE
FESSENDEN
NORTH DAKOTA

LONGITUDE: 99° 37' 27.8"
LATITUDE: 47° 38' 56.3"



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
as part of the Department of the Interior program
for the development of the Missouri River Basin
Control by USGS and USC&GS

Culture and drainage in part compiled from
aerial photographs taken 1940
Topography by plane table methods 1948
Polyconic projection 1927 North American datum
10,000 foot grid based on North Dakota coordinate system,
North Zone

SCALE 1:24000
CONTOUR INTERVAL 5 FEET
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

THIS MAP COMPLETES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO OR WASHINGTON 25, D. C.