

3011

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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NOV 22 1988

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Mahnomen City Hall
other names/site number Mahnomen City Hall

2. Location

street & number 104 W. Madison Ave. not for publication N/A
city, town Mahnomen vicinity N/A
state Minnesota code MN county Mahnomen code 087 zip code 56557

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Nina M Archabal 11/14/88
Signature of certifying official Nina M. Archabal Date
Minnesota State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Andrew Byer 12/22/88
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/CITY HALL

GOVERNMENT/CITY HALL

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

(enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETEwalls STONE, CONCRETE

OTHER: WPA Public Architecture

roof CONCRETEother

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Mahnomen City Hall is an irregularly-shaped reinforced concrete building encased with random coursed ashlar stone in a variety of sizes and colors. It is located at the southwest corner of Main Street and Madison Avenue in a small (1980 pop. 1,283) northwestern Minnesota community which is the county seat and situated entirely within the White Earth Reservation of the Chippewa Indians. The Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.)-constructed detached building is visually distinctive, particularly in comparison with other early twentieth century commercial and residential buildings located in the community. Less than three feet to the immediate south of the City Hall is the recently-constructed Mahnomen Municipal Liquor Store, a one-story structure that obscures the entire south wall of the City Hall but is not attached.

The Mahnomen City Hall, which is entirely faced in square fieldstone, has an unusual asymmetrical design that typifies many of the locally designed W.P.A.-period buildings in Minnesota. As originally constructed, the 1937 54' x 84' building resembled a modified "L" plan exhibiting a two-story rectangular-shaped, hipped roof block built in a north-south direction which served as the fire station on the ground floor and council chamber on the second level. Attached to the southeast corner was a one-story hipped-roof municipal liquor store. Projecting three stories in height at the north junction of the "L" was a bell tower which also provided access to the upper floor city offices.

In 1948, due to overcrowded work space, the building was expanded to the west by the addition of a one-story section built nearly flush with the facade but only two-thirds as deep as the original fire station. During the construction of this addition workers carefully removed cut stones from the west exterior wall in order to reuse them in the facade of the addition. Bricks carry the remaining two outside walls.

The integrity of the Mahnomen City Hall is generally excellent with the exception of window changes and limited interior remodeling. The one-story liquor store fronting on Main Street is presently used as the public library and has a pair of centrally-located doors flanked by large single-pane fixed windows. The north wall has three sets of double transom windows (a variation from the original fixed panes). Inside, original liquor cabinets shelve books and wooden cooler doors and front display window areas remain intact. A false ceiling and fluorescent lights were installed during the 1948 remodeling.

Access to the tower is provided by the original north-facing wooden door. Tall,

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narrow 14-light fixed windows pierce both the north and east sides of the middle level. The third story, which formerly housed the village fire bell, has three openings that were covered with steel panels in 1984 to prevent water leakage.

Entrance to the original fire station is through an aluminum and glass door; this replaced the original wooden and glass garage door in 1984. The raised letters "CITY HALL" span the width of the concrete lintel. Four casement windows directly above the entry light the north room of the second floor. Three small, fixed multi-light windows are located on the second-story east wall, and a series of casements pierce the second-floor west wall. The south elevation has no openings. The former city council room to the south has a fireplace along the south wall made of cut fieldstone. The smaller north council chamber contains its original parquet wooden floor.

Stone walls of the 1937 building are capped by two tiers of smooth concrete (the tower has one tier) to form a cornice that is canted at each corner. A concrete belt course encircles the original structure, and all windows and doors in the entire building are surrounded by a wide band of smooth concrete placed to imitate quoins. One of two north-facing wooden garage doors in the 1948 addition was enclosed with a steel door and metal siding in 1984.

Despite minor alterations, the Mahnomen City Hall easily recalls its association with New Deal-sponsored architecture. The variety of sizes, colors and textures of the stone used in the exterior wall surfaces clearly indicate the intensity of labor required to erect such a building. With its facade made of fieldstones from the 1937 structure and compatible one story height, the 1948 addition appropriately blends with the original design to create a striking public building inspired by the Works Progress Administration.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Significant Person

N/A

Period of Significance

1936-37

Significant Dates

1937

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Carter, George H., and Company, architect

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Built in 1937, the Mahnomen City Hall is historically and architecturally significant as a good example of the labor-intensive, inexpensive type of construction sponsored by the Works Progress Administration during the Depression era. In the context of W.P.A. buildings throughout Minnesota, the City Hall in Mahnomen is a distinctive representation of an "administrative-type" building, of which there were 30 erected in the state by the relief agency. It derives historical significance for its associative qualities as a multi-purpose building whose original function was municipal liquor store, city council room, library and fire station. Today the building continues to serve the community in a variety of important ways as police department, library, city hall and public meeting space.

The era of most prominent direct government influence on public buildings was the Depression. Following the stock market crash in late 1929 many areas of northern Minnesota were adversely affected by the poor economic conditions. The village of Mahnomen, at the time with a population of less than 1,000, was dependant on agriculture, lumbering, tourism (the origin of the Mississippi River within Itasca State Park is 40 miles east of Mahnomen), and the sale of Chippewa Indian-harvested wild rice for its local economy. As unemployment increased, Federal relief programs including the W.P.A., which emphasized assistance through work projects rather than direct aid, provided much-needed employment in a variety of ways.

Most visible among these projects were the public buildings erected under the auspices of the W.P.A. during the mid-1930s. In Minnesota, 1,633 public buildings were either constructed or had additions built by the W.P.A. A consistent component of the W.P.A. program was that at least 90 percent of the persons working on any project had to be taken from the public relief roles. In 1936, 207 such workers were employed in Mahnomen County.

In September 1936 the Mahnomen City Council voted in favor of erecting a new city hall and applied to the W.P.A. for the necessary funds. A total of \$30,631 was spent on the building, with \$6,800 and the city lot provided by the village of Mahnomen and the remaining \$23,831 contributed by the W.P.A. in labor and materials. The city hired George H. Carter of Carter and Meinecke, a Moorhead, Minnesota architectural firm to design the building. Carter had also been selected in 1936

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to design several buildings located at the Mahnomen County Fairgrounds, also in Mahnomen.

Carter's design of the Mahnomen City Hall is consistent with a central goal of W.P.A.-sponsored projects, which was later stated in a 1943 federal report encouraging architects to create simple, uncomplicated plans suitable for execution by unskilled labor. The Mahnomen building similarly reflects another W.P.A. objective of utilizing reinforced concrete and inexpensive, indigenous building materials to keep construction costs low. However, Mahnomen's City Hall is distinctive among administrative-type W.P.A. buildings in Minnesota for its use of rock-faced, squared fieldstone that exhibits an extremely high quality of craftsmanship and finished appearance. Other government-oriented W.P.A. buildings such as the Grey Eagle Village Hall (N.R. Todd Co.), Milaca Municipal Hall (N.R. Mille Lacs Co.) and Brandon Auditorium and City Hall (N.R. Douglas Co.) utilize weathered rubblestone for wall surfaces producing a more coarse image.

With the exception of the 1909 brick neo-classical Mahnomen County Courthouse (N.R.), the City Hall is the most architecturally significant public building in the village. Although it has been expanded with a 1948 addition, the scale and integrity of the original structure have not been comprised. Indeed, use of the same exterior hand-cut stones on the facade of the addition enhances the overall appearance of the building. Over its 50 year history, the City Hall has served the citizens of Mahnomen in a multitude of ways, and it continues to do so today.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Mahnomen City Council Minutes, 1936.
Mahnomen Pioneer 4 September 1936.
United States Federal Works Agency. Final Report on the W.P.A. Program: 1935-43.
Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946.
Works Progress Accomplishments - Minnesota 1935-1939 (no author). St. Paul, MN.:
The Administration, 1939.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property _____ Less than one _____

UTM References

A
 Zone Easting Northing

C

B
 Zone Easting Northing

D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property occupies:
Lots 11 and 12 of Block 11 of the Original Townsite of Mahnomen

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city lots that have historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title _____ Michael Koop _____
 organization _____ N/A _____ date _____ July 1987 _____
 street & number _____ 615 Jackson St., NE _____ telephone _____ 612-623-8356 _____
 city or town _____ Minneapolis _____ state _____ MN _____ zip code _____ 55413 _____