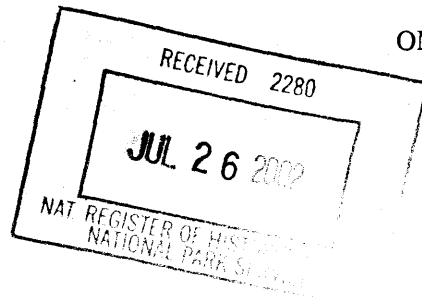


United States Department of Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Nicollet County Courthouse and Jail

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 501 South Minnesota Avenue not for publication N/A

city or town St. Peter vicinity N/A

state Minnesota code MN county Nicollet code 103 zip code 56082

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_\_\_ nationally x statewide \_\_\_\_\_ locally.  
(\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Ian R. Stewart Date 7/23/02  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
Minnesota Historical Society

State or federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
(\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

Nicollet County Courthouse  
Name of Property

Nicollet County, Minnesota  
County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

- I hereby certify that the 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.  
    \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
  - Removed from the National Register
  - Other (explain)

Signature of the Keeper: Edson H. Beall  
Date of Action: 9/6/02

**5. Classification**

- Ownership of Property Category of Property  
(Check as many as apply.) (Check only one box.)
- private
  - public-local
  - public-state
  - public-federal
  - building(s)
  - district
  - site
  - structure
  - object

Number of Resources within Property  
(Do not include listed resources in the count.)

	Contributing	Noncontributing
buildings	2	
sites		
structures		
objects	1	
total	3	0

Name of related multiple property listing  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT/Courthouse  
GOVERNMENT/Correctional Facility

Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT/Courthouse  
GOVERNMENT/Correctional Facility

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN/Romanesque Revival  
LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation STONE/Limestone  
walls BRICK  
roof METAL; ASPHALT  
other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Nicollet County Courthouse  
Name of Property

Nicollet County, Minnesota  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**  
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT  
ARCHITECTURE

**A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

**Period of Significance**  
1880-1952

**C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

**Significant Dates**  
1880-81, 1906-07

**D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in our prehistory or history.

**Significant Person**  
(Complete if Criterion B is marked)  
N/A

**Criteria Considerations**  
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

**Cultural Affiliation**  
N/A

**A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

**B** removed from its original location.

**C** a birthplace or grave.

**D** a cemetery.

**E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

**F** a commemorative property.

**G** less than 50 years of age achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Architect/Builder**

Bassford, Edward P., Architect (courthouse); Van Deusen, Andrew J., Architect (jail); Bohn and Wilce, Builder (courthouse); Nelson, J.B., Builder (jail)

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Nicollet County Courthouse  
Name of Property

Nicollet County, Minnesota  
County and State

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other state agency  
\_\_\_\_\_ Federal agency  
\_\_\_\_\_ Local government  
\_\_\_\_\_ University  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other

Name of repository: Minnesota Historical Society

\_\_\_\_\_ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 2.2 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>1/5</u> Zone	<u>4/2/3/5/4/0</u> Easting	<u>4/9/0/7/8/2/0</u> Northing	3	<u>1/5</u> Zone	<u>4/2/3/6/9/0</u> Easting	<u>4/9/0/7/8/4/0</u> Northing
2	<u>1/5</u> Zone	<u>4/2/3/6/0/0</u> Easting	<u>4/9/0/7/9/0/0</u> Northing	4	<u>1/5</u> Zone	<u>4/2/3/6/4/0</u> Easting	<u>4/9/0/7/7/6/0</u> Northing

\_\_\_\_\_ see continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Amy R. Squitieri, Manager of Historic Preservation  
organization MEAD & HUNT, Inc. date July 2000  
street & number 6501 Watts Road telephone (608) 273-6380  
city or town Madison state WI zip code 53719-2700

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

Maps: A U.S. Geological Survey map (7.5- or 15-minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs: Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Nicollet County Courthouse  
Name of Property

Nicollet County, Minnesota  
County and State

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name County of Nicollet  
street & number 501 South Minnesota Avenue telephone (507) 931-6800  
city or town St. Peter state MN zip code 56082

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 1

Nicollet County Courthouse  
St. Peter, Nicollet County, Minnesota

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**DESCRIPTION**

**Property and Setting**

The Nicollet County Courthouse and Jail stand facing northwest at 501 South Minnesota Avenue on the south edge of downtown St. Peter, Minnesota. The buildings presently occupy an entire city block delineated by South Minnesota Avenue to the northwest, Mulberry Street to the northeast, South Front Street to the southeast, and Myrtle Street to the southwest. Historically, the courthouse and jail occupied the west half of the block while houses stood on the east half. Additions to both buildings necessitated the removal of these houses.

**Courthouse**

The 1880-81 courthouse building measures 67 feet x 90 feet with 2-foot-thick, pinkish-brown brick walls. The raised foundation, window sills, label moldings, and other decorative details are limestone. The steeply-sloped, standing seam metal roof originally displayed cresting at the top and four decorative brick chimneys. The eaves feature widely spaced modillions within a cornice. A central, brick bell tower stands three and one-half stories tall and has stone details inscribed with "Nicollet County" and "Courthouse." Each face of the tower has a stone trimmed gable peak within which are two tall, rounded windows and an oculus beneath an ornate label molding, and a second oculus above the molding. A corbel table surrounds the tower's base. Features of the Romanesque Revival style exhibited on the building include: the tall, arched window openings; prominent central tower with pyramidal roof; polychromatic exterior finish with pink-brown brick walls and buff-colored, limestone window trim; cathedral-type windows in the tower and side bays; and corbel table at the base of the tower.

A restoration and expansion project undertaken in 1999-2000 followed the designs of Vetter Johnson Architects. This project involved repairing the roof and tower, which were damaged in the 1998 tornado, and restoring the building's original fenestration and entryway, which had been altered during previous remodeling efforts in 1967 and 1977.<sup>1</sup> Although the standing seam metal roof was restored in 1999-2000, the original cresting and chimneys were not reconstructed.

The courthouse has segmental arched openings on the first story and rounded arch window openings on the second story. The window openings are tall and narrow and are surmounted by limestone label moldings with exaggerated keystones and springing blocks. The 1999-2000 restoration project included

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<sup>1</sup> Steve Johnson, architect, with Vetter Johnson Architects, telephone interview by Amy Squitieri, 19 January 2000.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 2

Nicollet County Courthouse  
St. Peter, Nicollet County, Minnesota

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returning double-hung windows, which have aluminum sashes that replicate the wood originals, to the original openings. The basement has square window openings containing three-over-three, double-hung sashes and simple limestone lintels.

The front (northeast) facade is five bays wide and is dominated by the central tower. The facade steps back twice from the tower projection. Located at the base of the tower, the entry features a pair of metal doors recessed deep within a segmental arched opening. This segmental arch is capped with an ornately carved, peaked molding. The entrance and limestone steps were restored under the 1999-2000 project. On each face of the tower, two tall, rounded windows and an oculus are set beneath an ornate label molding that wraps around the tower as a string course. This cathedral-type window arrangement is repeated on the tower's base – directly above the entry door – and the side bays. A second oculus is set within the gabled peak at the top of each tower face. On the tower's front face at the juncture with the roof line, a half story includes two arched windows connected by a continued label molding.

The northeast and southwest facades read as three distinct sections, each with a different roof height. One section includes the front and rear of the building, which are on the same plane and share a common roof height. These front and rear portions consist of one and two bays, respectively. The building's middle section consists of six bays – the central two of which project – and has the tallest roof, save for the tower. The final section – added in 1917 – is at the rear of the original building. It includes three bays and has the lowest roof line. The tower projects above all the described sections and roof lines.

Projecting bays with gabled ends are centered on the rear (southeast), northeast, and southwest facades. On the northeast and southwest, these bays feature paired, arched windows surmounted by an oculus window – all grouped within a single label molding. A datestone reading "1880" is set above each window grouping. On the rear facade, a 1976-77 addition is attached to the projecting bay. This addition obscures all but the rear bay's gabled peak, which is decorated with a limestone arch and patterned brickwork.

The interior, which had been gutted during a remodeling project in the late 1970s, was modernized as part of Vetter Johnson Architects' project. The entry hall is expected to include historically sensitive tile flooring and lighting fixtures. Few original interior features remain in the courthouse except for benches and one stairway.<sup>2</sup>

A 1976-77 brick addition is located at the rear of the original courthouse, linking it to the adjacent jail and sheriff's residence. This structure has box-like massing; brick walls; tall, narrow, arched windows;

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<sup>2</sup> Steve Johnson interview.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
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Section 7 Page 3

Nicollet County Courthouse  
St. Peter, Nicollet County, Minnesota

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limestone accents; a flat roof; and a standing seam metal enclosure of mechanical systems atop the roof. Another addition, which surrounds the 1976-77 structure was constructed in 1999-2000.

Following its 1999-2000 restoration, the 1880-81 courthouse displays good integrity. The original entryway and fenestration pattern have been restored, giving the building an overall historic appearance. The rear additions, while large, are visually distinct from the original building, attaching only to the center bay of the rear (west) facade.

*Jail*

The 1906 jail is constructed of medium-brown, smooth, pressed brick and features a hipped roof with dormers on the front, north, and south. Rock-faced limestone is featured in the window lintels and sills and raised foundation. Simple modillions line the eaves of the main roof and dormers. The hipped roof was originally slate, but is now asphalt shingled. Features of the Queen Anne style include: an asymmetrical composition with offset tower and polygonal side bay; polychromatic exterior finish with brown brick walls and buff-colored, limestone lintels and foundation; and textural variation with the smooth walls and rough-cut lintels and foundation. The building's hipped roof and modillions under the eaves are typical of the late Queen Anne, marking its transition to the classical revival styles.

The front (northwest) facade includes a central, rounded arch entrance with limestone steps and a brick railing. A three-story rounded tower stands at the north corner with a corbelled cornice, crenellated parapet, and conical cap. The tower's third-story window openings are arched with a traced brick arch surround. A projecting, polygonal bay anchors this facade's southwest corner.

The first - and second-story windows are one-over-one, double hung with wood sashes. Smaller double-hung windows are found in the dormers. The windows appear in single, paired, and triple window arrangements. The basement has square window openings with single, fixed lights.

The northeast and southwest facades read as two sections. The front section is arranged as three bays. Projecting features on the front facade – the turret on the north and polygonal bay on the south – occupy the foremost bay of each side facade. The rear section of the northeast and southwest facades extends two bays and has a lower roof line. A brick portico with a flat roof and arched openings supported by square columns is centrally located on the south facade. The northeast facade includes a rounded arch entry like that on the front facade.

The interior of the jail does not retain historic features. Originally, the sheriff's residence occupied the front of the building, while the jail cells were located at the rear.



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Section 7 Page 4

Nicollet County Courthouse  
St. Peter, Nicollet County, Minnesota

The 1984 rear addition to the jail, designed by Foss Associates, received a design award due to its sympathetic blending of old and new.<sup>3</sup> This addition features brick walls; a hipped roof; a limestone foundation; limestone trim; and varying window patterns and materials, including arched and rectangular openings, and glass block and divided lights. The jail is also attached to the courthouse by that structure's 1976-77 addition.

The jail retains excellent integrity. The brick porch on the southwest facade was added after 1951, but matches the original building.<sup>4</sup> The addition, while large, is visually distinct from the original building, attaching via a hyphen at the rear of the jail. This addition is sympathetic to the original jail in both form and materials.

*Statue*

A 9-foot-tall, bronze statue of John A. Johnson stands facing west on a granite pedestal at the northwest corner of the courthouse block. Lettering reads "JOHN ALBERT JOHNSON, 1861-1909, BORN IN ST. PETER, THREE TIMES GOVERNOR OF MINNESOTA." The statue was sculpted by Andrew O'Connor, who created an identical one for the State Capital Mall, and was erected in 1913. Although four granite benches, which matched the pedestal were originally part of the monument to Johnson, they do not remain.<sup>5</sup> The benches were arranged symmetrically at the outer edges of a "semicircular" plaza surrounding the monument.<sup>6</sup> Today a semicircular plaza of exposed aggregate surrounds the pedestal. This is the plaza's third design; the original plan having been modified in the 1970s. Sidewalks lead to the pedestal from the east and west for handicap access.

To the west of the courthouse's main entrance is a metal flagpole on a concrete base and a limestone military service memorial with a bronze plaque. Both were installed in 1981. The flagpole was replaced in 1999. All shrubbery was replaced in 2001. Efforts were made to retain established trees, but new trees have also been planted

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<sup>3</sup> Steve Johnson interview.

<sup>4</sup> The brick side porch does not appear on the 1951 Sanborn map. The 1908 and 1914 Sanborn maps show a wood frame porch at this location. Sanborn Map & Publishing Company, Ltd., Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for St. Peter, Minnesota, 1951 (update), Collection of the Minnesota Historical Society; and Sanborn Map & Publishing Company, Ltd., 1908 and 1914 maps, Collection of St. Peter City Hall.

<sup>5</sup> "Gov. Johnson Statue Arrives," St. Peter Herald, 11 July 1913.

<sup>6</sup> "County Pays Magnificent Tribute to Native Son," St. Peter Herald, 26 September 1913.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
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Section 8 Page 1

Nicollet County Courthouse  
St. Peter, Nicollet County, Minnesota

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**SIGNIFICANCE**

**Statement of Significance**

The Nicollet County Courthouse and Jail possess historical significance under National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) *Criterion A: Politics and Government*, having served as the seat of county government since 1881 and contributed to the maintenance of public order since 1906. The courthouse is one of the State's earliest, and architecturally it is an excellent example of the Romanesque Revival style. The jail and sheriff's residence exemplify the Queen Anne style. The complex provides an unusual example of a once-common building set in Minnesota; unlike the Nicollet County example, most other historic courthouses have lost their adjacent jails. Therefore, the Nicollet County Courthouse and Jail also qualify for the NRHP under *Criterion C: Architecture*. Additions to the rear of both buildings do not detract substantially from their historic integrity. The period of significance extends from 1880, when construction of the courthouse commenced, to 1952. The buildings – though expanded – continue to serve Nicollet County in their original roles. The complex fits into the historic context of "Cultural Development and Public Life" as defined in the 1991 "St. Peter's Historic Contexts Final Report of a Historic Preservation Planning Project." This context focuses on citizens' efforts to create a community, including participating in self-government.<sup>7</sup>

**Historic Context**

Nicollet County was first organized in 1853 with a meeting held in Traverse des Sioux. The county was named for Joseph Nicollet, the French cartographer employed by the United States government to survey the Minnesota River Valley in 1838 and 1839. In 1851, the treaty of Traverse des Sioux was signed, transferring 21 million acres of land in the Minnesota River Valley occupied by Native Americans to the U.S. government. Traverse des Sioux, about 1 mile north of St. Peter, served as a fur trading post prior to the treaty and competed with St. Peter for the area's first settlers. The Traverse des Sioux settlement grew to about 300 people with the formation of Nicollet County. County business and services were initially conducted in meeting rooms and jail space rented from private citizens. In 1858 a county election resulted in the transfer of the government to St. Peter and the village of Traverse des Sioux was largely abandoned.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Gemini Research, "St. Peter's Historic Contexts Final Report of a Historic Preservation Planning Project" (Minnesota State Historical Society, 1991), 67-75.

<sup>8</sup> Howard M. Nelson, "Courthouse History" in "Open House: Nicollet County Courthouse Addition and Courthouse Remodeling," Pamphlet dated 23 July 1978, Collection of the Nicollet County Historical Society, n.p.; Gemini Research, "Nicollet County Courthouse and Jail," Minnesota Architecture/History Inventory Form, 11 April 1998, Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office; Edward d. Neill, History of the Minnesota Valley (Minneapolis, Minn.: North Star, 1882), 638.

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Section 8 Page 2

Nicollet County Courthouse  
St. Peter, Nicollet County, Minnesota

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The courthouse, jail, and public offices were originally housed in the 1857 Convention Hall building, which was provided by the St. Peter Land Company and located at Minnesota and Broadway. The company had constructed the hall as part of its failed attempt to locate the state capital in St. Peter. A stone jail and sheriff's residence were erected by the county in 1871. In 1880 county commissioners voted to build a new courthouse and appointed three commissioners, A. Thorson, F.A. Donahower, and Martin Peterson, to the building committee. The commissioners' decision responded to a state ruling that county governmental centers must have buildings capable of protecting records from destruction by fire. The wood Convention Hall did not meet this need, as later proven when it burned to the ground in 1886 after having been put to use as the St. Peter City Hall.<sup>9</sup>

**Construction History**

The building committee of Commissioners Thorson, Donahower, and Peterson hired Edward P. Bassford as architect, selected a building site, and approved the plans for the new courthouse. On April 24, 1880, a construction contract was let to Bohn and Wilce of Winona. Peter Bolstad was engaged as superintendent of construction. The building opened on July 12, 1881. The total cost of the courthouse, including furnishings, was \$26,638.32. Original landscaping included 60 trees, gravel and stone sidewalks, and an iron fence surrounding the building. In 1917 an addition was made to the eastern end (rear) of the building with Ole Fredricksen serving as general contractor. The cost of the addition was over \$10,000.<sup>10</sup>

A building to house the jail and sheriff's quarters, designed by Andrew J. Van Deusen, was later constructed on the same block. Prior to construction of this structure, the jail had occupied a frame structure and, later, an 1871 stone building situated at the corner of Broadway and Washington Streets. In February 1906, commissioners reached an agreement to construct a new jail and awarded the general contract to J.B. Nelson for his bid of \$22,443. The building was completed on July 8, 1907.<sup>11</sup> In 1965 air conditioning, lowered ceilings, and new windows were installed in the courthouse. In 1968 an enclosed entry was added to the front of the courthouse, replacing the original steps and providing

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<sup>9</sup> Nelson; Gemini Research, "Nicollet County Courthouse and Jail."

<sup>10</sup> Nelson; "The St. Peter Area . . . A Second Century," Section A: History, St. Peter Herald, 18 November 1985, Clippings file, Nicollet County Historical Society; Gemini Research, "Nicollet County Courthouse and Jail;" and "Diamond Jubilee Anniversary Number," Special Supplement to St. Peter Herald, 1 October 1930, 67.

<sup>11</sup> Nelson; "The St. Peter Area . . . A Second Century;" Gemini Research, "Nicollet County Courthouse and Jail;" and "Diamond Jubilee," 67.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 3

Nicollet County Courthouse  
St. Peter, Nicollet County, Minnesota

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access to the basement.<sup>12</sup> These alterations were later reversed in conjunction with repairs to the courthouse necessitated by tornado damage.

To provide additional space for county offices, a rear addition to the courthouse was underway by February 1976 with completion expected within a year. The county purchased remaining houses on the block to provide space for the addition.<sup>13</sup> The Mankato architectural firm of Wick-Kagermeier-Skaar designed the addition, and the George Carlstrom Construction Company, also of Mankato, served as general contractor. The addition cost \$913,512.50 with \$70,000 in furnishings.<sup>14</sup> In 1977 Wick-Kagermeier-Skaar prepared plans for remodeling the interior of the courthouse, remodeling and adding to the jail building, and replacing the glass in the courthouse entryway for an additional cost of \$200,000.<sup>15</sup>

The new Nicollet County Jail opened in the fall of 1984. Designed by Foss Associates, the facility received a design award from the American Institute of Architects in honor of its success in combining the old and the new. The addition, which is attached to the rear of the 1906 building, includes jail space, a security garage, and an outside recreation area for prisoners.<sup>16</sup>

The March 1998 tornado damaged the courthouse's original tower and roof and the 1968 entry addition. With financial assistance from the state, Nicollet County undertook an extensive restoration project in 1999-2000 in which it removed the unsympathetic entryway and returned full-size windows to the original openings. Under this project, the interior, which had been gutted during the restorations in the 1940s and late 1970s, was modernized. The new interior window trim and entry hall is historically sensitive. The county initiated construction of another courthouse addition, which is to the rear of and surrounding the 1977 addition, to be completed in early 2001. The exterior restoration, new interior finishes, and courthouse addition were designed by Vetter Johnson Architects.

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<sup>12</sup> "Completion of Nicollet Co. courthouse remodeling near," Mankato Free Press, 17 October 1968, Clippings file, Nicollet County Historical Society.

<sup>13</sup> "Construction," photograph and caption, St. Peter Herald, 17 June 1976, Clippings file, Nicollet County Historical Society; and Nelson.

<sup>14</sup> "Taking shape," photograph and caption, Mankato Free Press, 22 December 1976, Clippings file, Nicollet County Historical Society; and Gemini Research, "Nicollet County Courthouse and Jail."

<sup>15</sup> "Departments Considered in the Remodeling of Courthouse," St. Peter Herald, 26 May 1977, Clippings file, Nicollet County Historical Society; and Nelson.

<sup>16</sup> "The St. Peter Area . . . A Second Century."

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 4

Nicollet County Courthouse  
St. Peter, Nicollet County, Minnesota

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*Architects and Artists*

Minnesota architects Edward P. Bassford and Andrew J. Van Deusen, who were noted for other public building commissions, designed the courthouse and jail, respectively. Sculptor Andrew O'Connor's statue of Governor John A. Johnson stands on the grounds. A local contractor, Ole Fredricksen, contributed to the evolution of the complex by adding to the rear of the courthouse in 1917. In 1977 and 1984, the courthouse and jail were expanded according to designs by Wick-Kagermeier-Skaar and Foss Associates, respectively. The firm of Vetter Johnson Architects, Inc., has prepared plans for another addition to the courthouse to be completed in early 2001.

Edward P. Bassford (1837-1912) was one of St. Paul's most important early architects and served as supervising architect for the U.S. government in that city. After receiving training in architecture in Boston as an apprentice to Charles Painter, he joined the firm of Peabody and Stearns. He then served in the Civil War before entering into a brief partnership, Sparrow and Bassford, in Portland, Maine. In 1866 he moved to St. Paul where he entered into business with P. Donovan for 3 years, then A.M. Radcliffe for 3 years.<sup>17</sup>

From 1872 when he established an independent practice to the early 1890s, Bassford rose to prominence amongst academically trained architects. His practice was an immediate success as he achieved commissions for two, first-class, out-state hotels, the St. James (1874-75) in Red Wing (listed on the NRHP in 1982) and the Nicollet Hotel (1873) in St. Peter (listed on the NRHP in 1975). In St. Peter, Bassford also designed Old Main (1875) on the campus of Gustavus Adolphus College (listed on the NRHP in 1976). In the 1880s and 1890s his commissions in St. Paul included houses, apartments, city hall (demolished), commercial buildings – including Germania Life (demolished) and Merchant's National (listed on the NRHP in 1974) – and an institution, St. Joseph's Academy (listed on the NRHP in 1975).<sup>18</sup> He also designed the courthouse, sheriff's residence and jail for Redwood County in the early 1890s. The Nicollet County Courthouse shares Romanesque Revival features – including rounded arch window treatment and corbeled ornament – with other Bassford designs of the 1880s, such as the NRHP-listed Walsh Building (1888) [listed on the NRHP in 1989].<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> "Designer of Courthouse and Nicollet House," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 20 July 1912, from "Edward P. Bassford" Name file, Northwestern Architectural Archives; and "Edward P. Bassford," *The Western Architect*, September 1903, from "Edward P. Bassford" Name file, Northwestern Architectural Archives.

<sup>18</sup> "Edward P. Bassford," *The Western Architect*; and "St. James Hotel Complex," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office.

<sup>19</sup> "Walsh Building," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office; and "History/Architecture Inventory" database of historic properties, Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office.

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Nicollet County Courthouse  
St. Peter, Nicollet County, Minnesota

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Andrew J. Van Deusen (1859-1922) was born in central Michigan and moved to Winona, Minnesota, by 1886. He was engaged as a foreman with the Laird Norton Co. planing mill before beginning his own architectural practice. By 1904, he advertised in the Winona city directory as an architect preparing "plans and specifications for buildings of all descriptions." William H. Stevens soon joined in his practice. Van Deusen was builder or architect for a school, a public library, the city hall, churches, and houses in Winona. It is unclear whether Stevens or Van Deusen served in the role of architect; for one Winona project, Stevens was described as the architect and Van Deusen as "superintendent of construction." By 1910, Van Deusen also ran the Concrete Culvert Co.<sup>20</sup> Van Deusen is identified as having designed Lincoln County's 1904 jail and sheriff's residence (razed 2001), a brick building with Queen Anne features, including crenelated tower, polychromatic materials, rusticated foundation, and roof line modillions, similar to those found in the Nicollet County building.<sup>21</sup>

Born in Norway, Ole Fredricksen (1868-1945) came to St. Peter in 1888 and served as contractor for the 1917 addition to the courthouse. He was a partner with John Iverson in a St. Peter construction business from 1898 to 1905. He operated his own business, the Fredricksen Construction Company, until 1940 before passing it along to his son Harding. Fredricksen built houses, public buildings, and businesses in St. Peter, as well as rural schools in Nicollet County and public buildings and offices in surrounding communities. His other projects in St. Peter included the Odd Fellow Building, library, and armory – all on South Minnesota Avenue. Fredricksen is listed in Minnesota business directories for 1899-1900 and 1920-1921.<sup>22</sup>

Sculptor Andrew O'Connor (1874-1941), who had trained in Paris, crafted the John A. Johnson statue on the courthouse grounds. He made an identical statue for the state capital grounds. His other works include two statues of Abraham Lincoln – one erected in front of the Illinois Statehouse in 1918; the other erected in Fort Lincoln Cemetery, Maryland, in 1922.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Clippings file, Collection of the Winona County Historical Society, Ginger Keith, archivist.

<sup>21</sup> "Lincoln County Courthouse & Jail," Minnesota Historic Architecture Inventory Form, Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office; and "History/Architecture Inventory" database of historic properties.

<sup>22</sup> "February 1 to Some, But Not to Ole Fredricksen," St. Peter Herald, 4 February 1938, Clippings file, Nicollet County Historical Society; "Fredricksen Papers: Collection Information Form," Nicollet County Historical Society; Watson & Company, Watson & Co.'s Classified Business Directory of Minneapolis, St. Paul and Other Enterprising Cities of Minnesota and Wisconsin, 1899/1900 (New York: The Company, 1900); and Minnesota State Gazetteer and Business Directory for 1920-1921 (St. Paul; Minneapolis: R.L. Polk & Co., 1920).

<sup>23</sup> Gemini Research, "Nicollet County Courthouse and Jail."

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Nicollet County Courthouse  
St. Peter, Nicollet County, Minnesota

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The Mankato architectural firm of Wick-Kagermeier-Skaar designed the 1977 courthouse addition and completed plans for the interior remodeling that began that year. The 1984 jail addition was designed by Foss Associates. Vetter Johnson Architects of St. Peter designed the exterior restoration work, new interior finishes, and courthouse addition for the 1999-2001 project.

*Architectural Styles*

The Nicollet County Courthouse and Jail are significant examples of the Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne styles, respectively. In Minnesota, the Romanesque Revival style was popular between the 1850s and 1880s and was frequently applied to ecclesiastical buildings and public buildings. A later manifestation of this style, the Richardsonian Romanesque, was particularly popular for county courthouses. The Queen Anne style was employed from about 1880 to 1910 and is characterized by irregularity of massing and variety of texture and color. This style found its most common application in Minnesota residential architecture and was used to a lesser extent in public and commercial buildings.

The Romanesque Revival style is marked by the repetition of the rounded arch in windows, entrances, and corbel tables. Towers were often employed and finished off with parapets or a pyramidal roof. Massing was either asymmetrical, with towers of differing heights, or symmetrical. The Nicollet County Courthouse displays features of the Romanesque Revival style including: tall, rounded arch window openings; prominent central tower with pyramidal roof; polychromatic exterior finish with pink-brown brick walls and buff-colored, limestone window trim; cathedral-type windows in the tower and side bays; and corbel table at the base of the tower.

The Queen Anne style is distinguished by an asymmetrical facade, steeply pitched roof, varied wall texture and color, and projecting towers or bays. Features of the Queen Anne style present in the Nicollet County Jail include: an asymmetrical composition with offset, round tower and polygonal side bay; polychromatic exterior finish with red brick walls and buff-colored, limestone lintels and foundation; and textural variation with the smooth walls and rough-cut lintels and foundation. The building's hipped roof and modillions under the eaves are typical of the late Queen Anne, marking its transition to the classical revival styles.

*Comparison Properties*

Fifty-one county courthouses in Minnesota are currently listed on the NRHP; 12 of these listings include a jail and/or sheriff's residence. Only five facilities were built earlier than the Nicollet County Courthouse: the Dakota County Courthouse (1869-71); Houston County Courthouse and Jail (1875, 1883); McLeod County Courthouse (1876, 1909); Sibley County Courthouse (1879); and Washington

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Nicollet County Courthouse  
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County Courthouse (1869).<sup>24</sup> The jails in LeSueur, and Rice Counties – all built in the first decade of the twentieth century – are reportedly similar in style to the contemporaneous Nicollet County Jail.

The following comparison properties are found in surrounding counties:

The Blue Earth County Courthouse (1886-88) is significant as a prominently sited and elaborately articulated building that has long served as the county seat. Exterior features, executed in the French Second Empire and Italian Renaissance styles, are articulated in the most elaborate use of local, buff-colored stone found in Mankato's buildings. The Blue Earth County Courthouse was listed on the NRHP in 1980.

The LeSueur County Courthouse (1896) and Jail (1914) are significant as the seat of county government and the best representatives of the role of county government in the development of the city of LeCenter. The courthouse displays the Richardsonian Romanesque style, while the Queen Anne jail features massing, fenestration, and details that are much like the Nicollet County Jail. The jail was designed by Mankato architect Albert Schippel, and built by the same contractor, J.B. Nelson, as the Nicollet County Jail. The LeSueur County Courthouse and Jail were listed on the NRHP in 1981.

The old Sibley County Courthouse (1879) is significant as an example of an Italianate public building and as a reminder of the role of Henderson as the county seat until 1915. The Old Sibley County Courthouse was listed on the NRHP in 1979.

The Waseca County Courthouse (1897) is significant as the seat of county government and the best representative of the role of county government in the development of the city of Waseca. The buff-colored brick structure draws from the Richardsonian Romanesque style. The Waseca County Courthouse was listed on the NRHP in 1982.

Like the Nicollet County Courthouse, both the LeSueur and Waseca County Courthouses were expanded in the mid-1970s. It is not known whether the courthouses described above have undergone other alterations since being listed on the NRHP. The Nicollet County Courthouse and Jail, while expanded and joined by later additions, present strong examples of the Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne styles, respectively, from their principal street facing on Minnesota Avenue. The additions are restricted to the back of the complex and do not detract from the buildings' historic architectural expression.

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<sup>24</sup> "History/Architecture Inventory" database of historic properties, National Register Nominations and Inventory Forms, Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office.



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Nicollet County Courthouse  
St. Peter, Nicollet County, Minnesota

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As the seat of government in Nicollet County since 1881, the Nicollet County Courthouse and Jail property also possesses historical significance under NRHP *Criterion A: Politics and Government*. In 1906, the county added the role of maintaining public order with the construction of the jail. County business, including court hearings and provision of services, was conducted within the 1881 courthouse and, later, within a 1917 rear addition. After a second addition opened in 1978, the original courthouse was remodeled to accommodate welfare and extension offices, the county nurse, the soil conservation department, a district courtroom, veteran's services, the law library, judges' chambers, and a jury room.<sup>25</sup>

**CONCLUSION**

The Nicollet County Courthouse and Jail possess historical significance under NRHP *Criteria A: Politics and Government* and *C: Architecture*. The complex continues to serve as the seat of county government and to contribute to the maintenance of public order. Architecturally, the Nicollet County Courthouse and Jail provide an unusual, surviving example of a once-common building set in Minnesota. In addition, the courthouse and jail represent excellent public examples of the Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne styles, respectively. Modern additions are confined to the rear of the buildings and do not detract substantially from their historic integrity.

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<sup>25</sup> Nelson.

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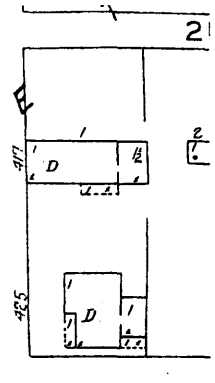
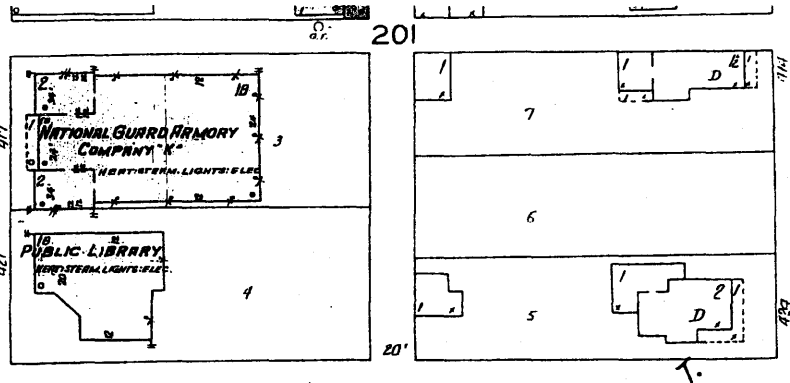
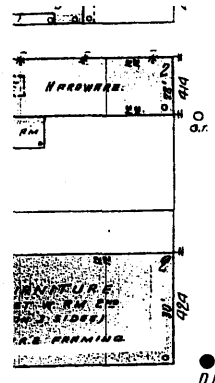
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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Nicollet County Courthouse and Jail occupy Block 200 of the Plat of St. Peter in its entirety. The parcel measures 278 feet on the northwest and southeast sides by 348 feet on the northeast and southwest sides.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary of the nominated property includes the parcel of land historically associated with the courthouse and jail.

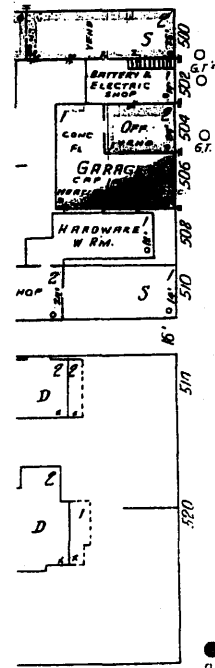


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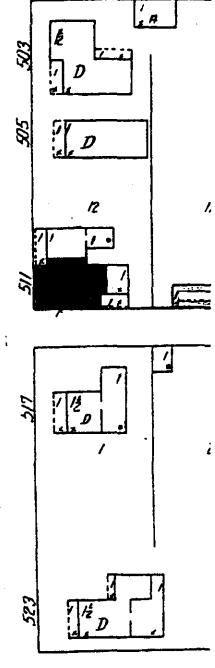
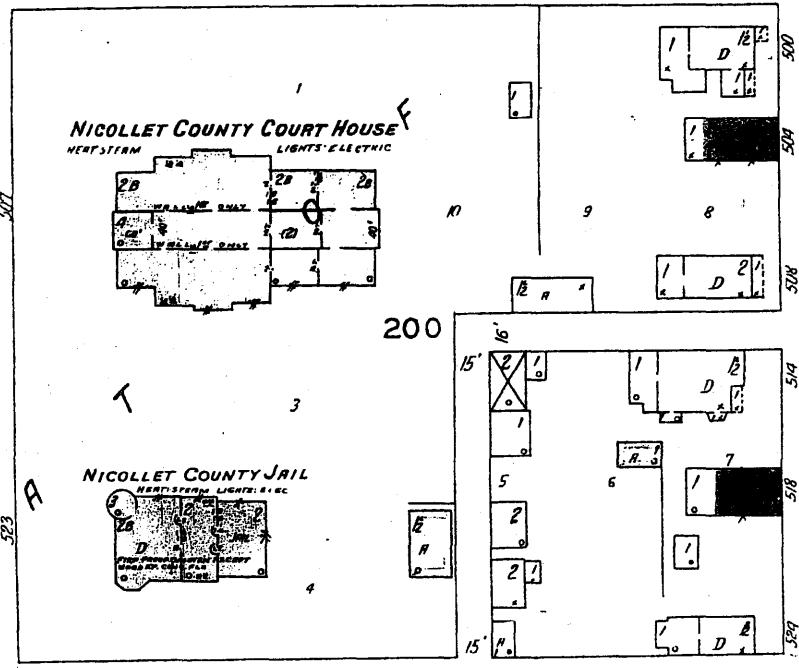
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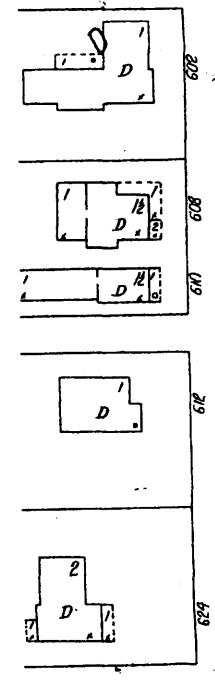
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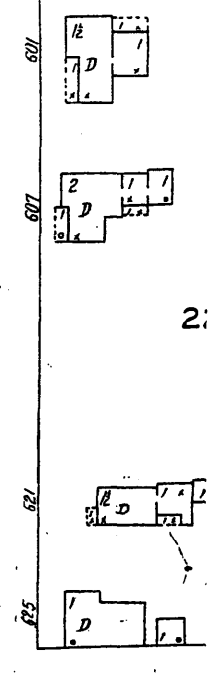
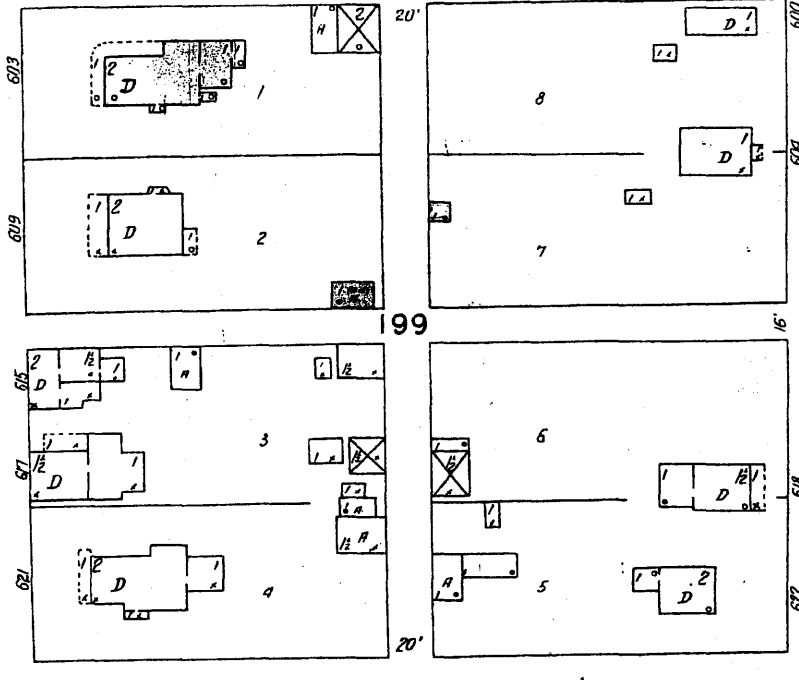
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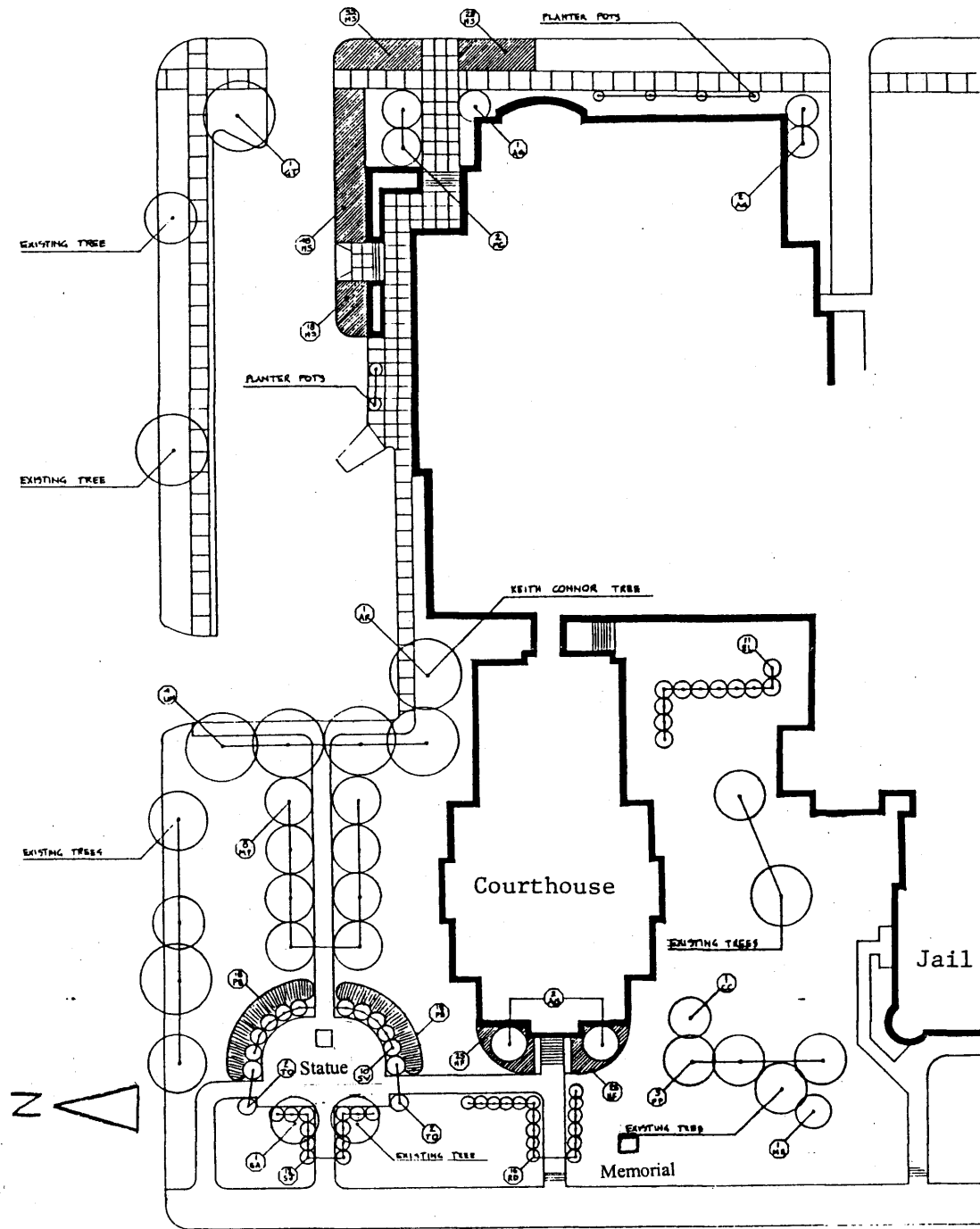


Nicollet County Courthouse and Jail  
Nicollet County, MN  
1927

8" W. PIPE



80'



s. minnesota ave.

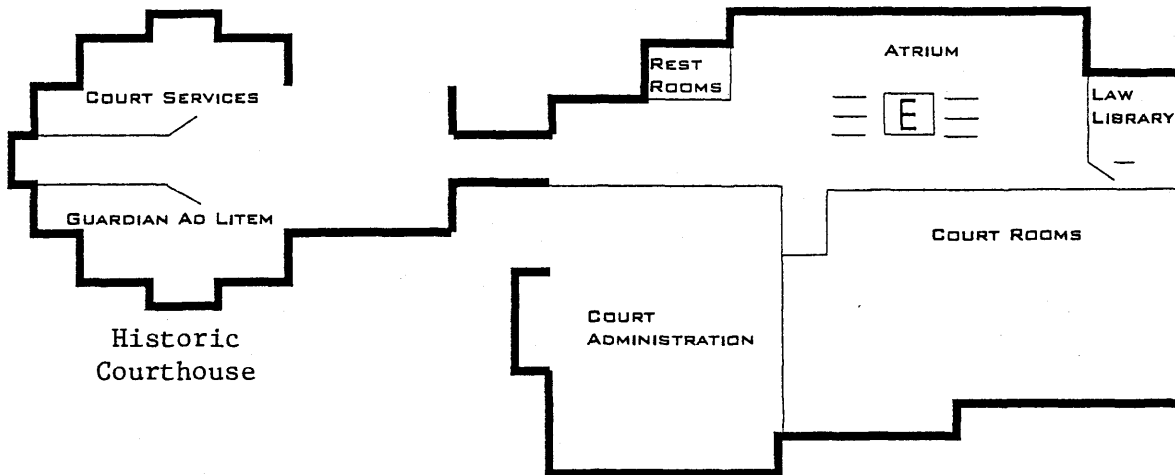
Nicollet County Courthouse and Jail  
 Landscape Plan with Planting Details  
 Nicollet County, MN  
 2001

# Floor Plan of Nicollet County Government Center

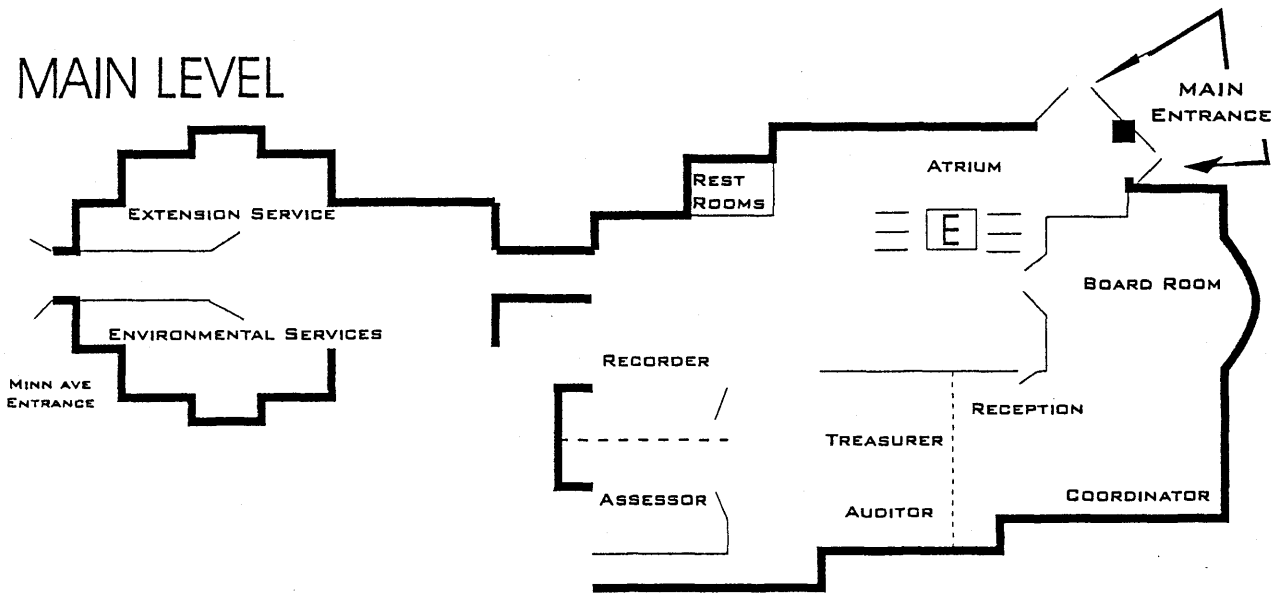
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## UPPER LEVEL



## MAIN LEVEL



## LOWER LEVEL

