

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

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

received MAR 20 1986
date entered APR 17 1986

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

1. Name

historic Rosebud County Courthouse

and/or common Rosebud County Courthouse

2. Location

street & number 1250 Main Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Forsyth N/A vicinity of

state Montana code 30 county Rosebud code 087

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

4. Owner of Property

name Rosebud County

street & number 1250 Main Street

city, town Forsyth N/A vicinity of state Montana

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Rosebud County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Forsyth state Montana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>N/A</u>

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Rosebud County Courthouse is a Neo-Classical style two story, reinforced concrete and masonry building constructed on an elevated sandstone foundation. It is located between 12th and 13th Avenues on Main Street in the relatively small (1980 population: 2553) agricultural town of Forsyth in the Yellowstone River Valley of southeastern Montana. In form, the building is symmetrical and square-shaped, with a colossal pedimented frontispiece dominating the south-facing central entrance. Seven wide steps flanked by two globe lamps raised on concrete pedestals lead to paired wooden doors with a multi-paned transom. Framing the entrance is an egg-and-dart molding with rosettes spaced at regular intervals. Above the doorway is a small masonry balustraded balcony supported by two decorative brackets. Behind the balcony is a two-light horizontal sliding window with an infilled panel above. Flanking the balcony, a pair of columns extend from a pedestal atop the foundation to the entablature under the pediment and are capped by Ionic capitals. Large pilasters on each side of the columns extend for the same height as the columns. The columns and pilasters support a giant order pediment that features a single light oval window in the tympanum capped by an acanthus leaf.

The south facade of the elevated sandstone foundation is pierced on each side of the entrance by three two-light sliding windows with an infilled panel directly above. All original double hung sash windows on the entire building were similarly altered in 1980. A wide sandstone beltcourse at the top of the foundation wraps fully around the building. Spandrels separate the first and second story windows, which have the same configuration as those in the foundation. A copper cornice with dentils and block modillions extends around the entire structure, and another narrow band of copper caps the parapet.

The east and west facades are three bays wide and have slightly recessed central bays. Each facade features an entrance with two aluminum and glass doors centered in the raised foundation and flanked on each side by long, narrow single light windows. Three two-light sliding windows punctuate each bay on the second and third floors of each elevation. The rear (north) elevation has two aluminum and glass doors flanked by two sets of twin-light sliding windows with infilled panels. The second and third floors are pierced by a set of two-light sliding windows which flank a single pane window divided by two slightly projecting columns. The cornice and parapet are identical to the remainder of the building. A small, sandstone shed is attached at the northeast corner of the building.

Placed atop the roof is an enclosed octagonal belvedere with a copper cornice capped by a copper dome. The belvedere has eight two-light fixed windows spaced between narrow paired Ionic columns which support the ribbed dome. The dome is designed to accommodate a large clock face in each cardinal direction, and it is topped by a 20 foot flagpole.

The interior of the building has walls and ceilings finished in plaster, while there is 42" marble wainscoting and trim, and a combination of marble and oak wood baseboards. The second and third floors have similar finish materials as the first floor, with scagliola Ionic columns and pilasters, dentils and an egg and dart molding, and wide marble and terrazo staircases. Decorative murals are painted on several walls in the courtroom and on the third floor. The rotunda ceiling is decoratively painted and contains leaded glass windows.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1913 **Builder/Architect** Gray Construction Co./Link & Haire,

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

architects

The Rosebud County Courthouse completed in 1914 is significant for its representation of growth in the town of Forsyth and the patterns of political and economic development in Rosebud County, Montana. The Courthouse is also significant for its architecture as a good example of the distinctive Neo-Classical style as designed by the well known Montana architectural firm of Link and Haire.

In 1881 the Northern Pacific Railroad entered eastern Montana and began laying track in the Yellowstone River Valley. Early in its history the Northern Pacific primarily transported livestock, but it also shipped building supplies for the construction of towns which were to serve as the center of the railroad's operation. Livingston (in south-central Montana) and Forsyth were both planned in this way and received tons of freight but shipped practically nothing during the late 19th century. Forsyth was created by the Northern Pacific in October 1882, and designed as a crew-change point and minor repair facility for freight operations. Between 1882-1883 the community grew rapidly and bustled with activity with two hotels, two mercantile stores, a section house, numerous other small businesses, and a ferry linking the north and south sides of the Yellowstone River. A major fire in 1888, however, destroyed seven businesses along Main Street and severely hampered the town's growth at the end of the 19th century.

Cattle ranching and agricultural crops in the Yellowstone Valley produced only marginal profits for ranchers until the turn of the century. But in the early 1900s, with the development of large-scale irrigation and dry-farming techniques, the rural economy changed and improved dramatically. The valleys of the Tongue, Rosebud, Big Horn and Little Big Horn rivers as well as other smaller streams provided fertile soils for growing large quantities of hay, grain, vegetables and fruit. After 1900, railroad construction resumed as the national economy prospered, and in 1908 the Milwaukee Road crossed into Rosebud county via Fallon and Forsyth. With two major rail lines passing directly through it, Forsyth soon became well known as a mercantile, banking, and supply center for Rosebud County, providing goods for sheep and cattle ranchers throughout the area.

Until 1901, Custer County was the largest county in the United States, measuring about 200 miles in length, 130 miles in width, and comprising 26,580 square miles of land. By 1895, serious interest in subdividing Custer County was provided by Forsyth State Representative James Hopkins who unsuccessfully introduced House Bill No. 12 to create Rosebud County. Citizens had argued for years that the travel distance from the western part of Custer County to the county seat in Miles City was too time-consuming and expensive, taxation rates were lower for new counties, and administration of county needs by interested, local residents was more beneficial and less costly for taxpayers. Two more legislative attempts to secede in 1897 and 1899 failed to create the county, but in 1901 Rosebud

9. Major Bibliographical References

They Came and Stayed: Rosebud County History. Forsyth, MT: Rosebud County Bicentennial Committee, 1977.

Personal Interview with District Judge Alfred Coate, Forsyth, MT., March, 1984.

Architectural Plans drawn by Link & Haire for the Rosebud County Courthouse, Nov. 25, 1911.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approx. 2 acres

Quadrangle name Forsyth

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	3
---	---

3	7	0	9	6	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

5	1	2	4	9	5	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

B

--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

C

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

E

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

F

--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

G

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

H

--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

All of block 56 of the Original Townsite of Forsyth. SE 1/4 Section 14, T6N R40E

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Eldon Rice and Mrs. Russell M. Garfield

organization date 4/25/84

street & number Diamond Ranch telephone 406-347-5473

city or town Forsyth state Montana 59327

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

*mrs
mk
pj*

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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Marvella Slayton*

title SHPO date 3-17-86

For NPS use only

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

William B. Bushong date 4/17/86

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

County was introduced. Forsyth apparently had always been informally considered as the location for a new county seat, and without opposition from other communities, it became the permanent site soon after the county boundaries had been established. Five of six counties which were created from Custer County emerged during an extensive county-splitting decade in Montana from 1910-1920, and a total of thirty-two counties in Montana were created after the turn of the century. The original boundary of Rosebud County included all of Treasure County to the west, and part of Big Horn County to the southwest. As Custer County had been subdivided, Rosebud County was further split as Big Horn County in 1913 and Treasure County in 1918 seceded.

In 1904 Rosebud County made its first expenditure of public funds by voting bonds for \$50,000 to construct the first bridge in the county across the Yellowstone River at Forsyth. The bridge was completed in 1905 at a cost of \$57,000. In 1907 the Northern Pacific Railroad employed 200 men in the community and had a monthly payroll of about \$12,000. The same year they built a large wool warehouse for \$25,000. The first courthouse building, a wood frame structure that had also served at one time as the Forsyth School, was located on the corner of 11th and Cedar Streets. In ca. 1901 Maurice Bentall bought the property with the intention of renting it to house the recently-formed county offices, and in 1906 Rosebud County bought the building. Within four years the expanding county facilities required additional space, and one year later a petition was presented to the Board of County Commissioners requesting that they hold a bond election to authorize the sale of \$125,000 worth of county bonds to build and equip a new courthouse. Link and Haire were paid \$7,486.07 for their architectural plans and the Gray Construction Company of Watertown, South Dakota successfully bid \$80,959 to act as general contractor for the building. The County Commissioners employed E.C. Cox as Superintendent of Works at \$200 per month for the period from June 12, 1912 to August 12, 1913, and R.J. Ephland surveyed land for the courthouse for \$23.75. Original construction costs for the building totaled \$118,260.82 but additional expenditures of \$54,739.18 for art work, furniture and landscaping increased the total cost of the building to \$173,000. Because of a public outcry resulting from these unauthorized expenditures for the courthouse, a grand jury was called on October 2, 1913 to investigate the construction and cost of the building. Two county commissioners who were indicted successfully appealed the case and were eventually dismissed.

As an example of the refined and calm Neo-Classical style, the Rosebud County Courthouse reflects the prevailing vogue for classical forms in the first decades of the twentieth century. The building is distinguished by a symmetrical design of monumental proportions which is finished with a smooth and polished-like stone surface. The courthouse further characterizes the style with a colossal pedimented frontispiece flanked by a series of colossal pilasters, which highlight the primary facade. As is common with massive Neo-Classical buildings requiring a grand scale, the windows are long and rectangular-shaped, and the large parapet caps an unadorned roof line.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

John Link and Charles Haire formed one of the most significant architectural firms in Montana during the early-to-mid twentieth century. They had offices in Billings, Butte, Helena and Lewistown, and designed over 1,000 public, commercial, academic, private and institutional buildings in the northwestern United States including the additions to the Montana Capitol building. The firm was also responsible for the design of 18 of the 56 county courthouses in the state, including the Richland County Courthouse, built in 1927 and nearly identical in design to the Rosebud County Courthouse.

Despite alterations to the windows, the Neo-Classical style Rosebud County Courthouse retains good historic architectural integrity, and is one of the most prominent structures in Forsyth's central business district. The Courthouse reflects both the political and economic development of Rosebud County, and illustrates the creation and growth of county seats in the agriculturally-oriented area of eastern Montana.