

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

2218

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NOV 28 1989

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 "x" in 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 Hooker County Courthouse
other names/site number HO02-10

2. Location

street & number Cleveland Ave bet Railroad & 1st Sts N/A not for publication
city, town Mullen N/A vicinity
state Nebraska code NE county Hooker code 091 zip code 69152

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: County Courthouses of Nebraska
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.

James A. Hanson
Signature of certifying official

November 17, 1989
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau
In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See cont. 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:)

Patrick Andrus

1/10/90

for Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions) Government/courthouse Current Functions (enter categories from instructions) Government/courthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions) Late 19th & Early 20th century
American movements Materials (enter categories from instructions)
foundation brick
walls brick
roof other
other stone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

[X] See continuation sheet, section 7, page 1.

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) Politics/government
Architecture Period of Significance 1912-39 Significant Dates N/A
1912

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Significant Person N/A Architect/Builder Kirschke, Oscar R.

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

[X] See continuation sheet, section 8, page 1.

9. Major Bibliographical References

[X] See continuation sheet, section 9, page 1.

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 1.4 acres

UTM References

A	<u>1</u> <u>4</u> <u>3</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>7</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u> <u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>5</u> <u>6</u> <u>3</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	B	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
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	Zone Easting Northing		Zone Easting Northing

[] See continuation sheet, section 10, page 1.

Verbal Boundary Description

[X] See continuation sheet, section 10, page 1.

Boundary Justification

[X] See continuation sheet, section 10, page 1.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title **Barbara Beving Long, consultant**
organization **Four Mile Research Co.** date **November 12, 1989**
street & number **3140 Easton Boulevard** telephone **(515) 266-4964**
city or town **Des Moines** state **Iowa** zip code **50317**

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Built in 1912, the Hooker County Courthouse is an good, intact example of the Property Type, County Citadel. Identifying features include: rectangular shape, centered entrance, costly materials, distinctive ornamentation, stylistic influence from late 19th and early 20th century American movements, provision for fireproof storage, and impression of a government building representing modernity, simplicity, strength, and prosperity. In addition, the courthouse has other County Citadel characteristics: flat roof, raised basement, and designed by an architect. The courthouse has features uncommon for Nebraska courthouses, such as Chicago Style windows, yet carries a number of elements that reveal it to be a county courthouse.

The Hooker County Courthouse displays elements not found on most other Nebraska courthouses: district courtroom on first story, long corridors rather than only a central hallway with offices off them, one story, Chicago Style windows, and distinctive geometric ornamentation. Yet its steep hillside location and central location on the block, projecting entry pavilion, and specialized room uses reflect its county governmental use.

The Hooker County Courthouse is a rectangular building consisting of one story on a low raised basement. Cherry red brick contrasts with concrete coping and smooth "No. 1 blue Bedford" limestone (as noted in the architect's specifications). The brick is used effectively for the water table, sills and lintels (two rows of headers), and unusual moulded cornice. Stone trim highlights this brick work, especially the geometric pattern regularly spaced along the cornice and the stone squares at the top corners of the wood Chicago Style windows (here with a transom in the center).

The small brick parapet is higher at the corners and stepped at the small entry pavilion. Above the entrance are simple stone panels with "HOOKER COUNTY" and "1912". At the entrance a fine basket arch consisting of four rows of headers highlights a top light with vertical muntins and wood double doors below it. The arch ends with stone rectangles that unite it with brick lintels for small windows which flank the entry doors.

A prominent feature are the large (10' wide) three-part wood frame windows that effectively light the building. Two sets flank the centered entry pavilion of the principal or east facade, with two more on the main portions of the south and north sides. The rear one-third (west end) of the building is offset 3' from the main portion and has double-hung windows (one alone, one paired set) rather than the large Chicago Style ones. The west facade, the back of the building, continues the materials

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and treatment of the other sides.

A number of features reflect the early twentieth century construction date of the Hooker County Courthouse and exhibit stylistic influences from late 19th and early 20th century American movements. These include the Chicago Style windows, large size of the windows, simplified geometric ornamentation, contrasting stone detail, and flat surfaces.

A rather steep set of six brick steps have two stepped pedestals framing them and offer access to the first story. The 76x57' courthouse has a large vestibule with access to the 30x32' district courtroom directly off it. Double doors from the vestibule lead to the main hall where there are simple stairs to the basement. Two uneven corridors to offices are located at the west end and also the northwest corner of the main hall. The northwest corridor leads to a secondary entrance as well. Vault placement is variable.

Interior features are essentially unaltered and include original oak woodwork framing transoms and doors. Lights in doors, including the double entry doors outside, have an attractive starburst pattern (four crossed mullions). In the hall are large hanging light fixtures; three chains suspend from the ceiling a metal circular band, then smaller chains below the band hold a large patterned glass globe. The courtroom contains original golden oak woodwork, including the paneled judge's bench (includes witness box) and the jury box. A simple bar with squat balusters and newels with simple moulded caps separates the court from wood pews for spectators. Wood chairs have curving arm rests and simple slatted backs.

Interior alterations are minor and include some fluorescent light fixtures and modern wood paneling in some rooms. Although no longer used, the basement jail retains its metal cell. Exterior changes are similarly minor: a small entrance to the basement has been enclosed and a small storage unit addition, both on the south facade. An historic photograph shows the present building to be virtually unaltered.

The Hooker County Courthouse is centered on a steep site just off the commercial area of Mullen. Railroad tracks parallel this commercial district and are one block from the courthouse square as well. A long concrete walk having a series of steps leads to the courthouses's primary entrance. Two tall deciduous trees effectively frame this walkway. A shorter concrete walk also leads to the north entrance.

Just west of the north walkway is the present jail. This shallowly gabled concrete block building was built in the 1960s into the hillside,

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and very little of it is visible. On the southeast corner of the courthouse block is a library and small picnic area with outdoor restrooms. Built in 1965-66, the library is one-story, gabled, and faced with a reddish brown brick that goes well with the courthouse. Placed at the back of the site, amidst some tall trees, is a metal utility shed. For the purposes of this nomination, the recent library and jail are both noncontributing buildings, and the restrooms, utility shed, and simple flagpole were not counted.

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Built in 1912, the Hooker County Courthouse is architecturally significant (Criterion C) and also historically significant (Criterion A) for its association with politics and local government. The property derives its historic significance as the focal point for the administration of local government and institutions in Hooker County. It is a good example of public architecture in the community and contains design features and facilities distinctive to its design and use as a courthouse. It is as expensive and elaborate a facility as the county could afford.

As a good example of the County Citadel, the courthouse contains design features and facilities distinctive to its design and use (such as fireproof vaults), has a rectangular shape, centered entrance, costly materials, distinctive ornamentation, and stylistic influences from late 19th and early 20th century American movements. Elements of the design combine effectively to convey the impression of a government building representing modernity, simplicity, strength, and prosperity, also features of the County Citadel.

The Period of Significance is 1912, when construction began, to 1939, when the "fifty year rule" takes effect. The Hooker County Courthouse is being nominated as an example of the Property Type, County Courthouses of Nebraska (County Citadel) of the Context, County Government in Nebraska, 1854-1941, from the Multiple Property Submission, County Courthouses of Nebraska.

Hooker County is located in west central Nebraska in the heart of the Sand Hills. As such, it was not settled until the 1880s when settlers established cattle ranches in the area. A factor in spurring settlement was construction of a railroad through the county in 1887, a line connecting Billings, Montana with St. Louis.

In 1889, two years after rail construction, county residents successfully petitioned to organize the county, and elections were held the same year. The present county seat, Mullen, was and is the only town in the county. It was platted in 1888 at a site one mile west from the present location, likely in expectation of receiving rail service. However, the town founder apparently refused to sell enough land to the railroad for rail yards, and the company placed its depot grounds at the present site. The original Mullen failed to thrive without rail connections.

For the sum of one dollar, the county acquired the present courthouse site. County officials built a small one-story wood frame courthouse and a separate jail in 1889. Population levels remained low in the county,

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and its ability to provide governmental services was similarly limited. For example, after a fire in 1903 burned the school in Mullen, valuation in the school district was too small to support a bond issue for a replacement school. Four districts had to be combined to increase the amount of property values, and the combined districts sponsored a \$4,000 bond issue to build a four-room school.

Passage of the Kinkaid Act in 1904 improved materially the finances of Hooker County. New arrivals came to settle up 640-acre homesteads, a more realistic farm size in ranch land than the old 160-acre homestead requirement. Within a few years most of the land in the county had been claimed.

With the notably increased tax base Kinkaiders provided, Hooker County residents undertook to replace the tiny and less-than-fireproof original courthouse. On October 4, 1911, citizens filed a petition with the county board calling for a \$15,000 bond issue for a new courthouse. County records are incomplete, but it appears the measure passed in an election (likely held in conjunction with the November general election). In January 1912, the county board directed the county clerk to take steps to sell the courthouse bonds.

On February 6, county officials met with Oscar R. Kirschke, an architect from Grand Island, regarding the courthouse. (No other information is known about Kirschke.) His plans were approved the following month, and in April Robert Isdale of Kearney was selected to be contractor with the low bid of \$11,458.

The old courthouse was sold, and county officers moved to temporary quarters in the Hawley Building. Construction proceeded through the summer of 1912, and on September 21, 1912, the board, with the architect, inspected and formally accepted the new courthouse on behalf of the county.

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Long, Barbara Beving. "County Courthouses of Nebraska." Multiple Property Submission. 1989.
Nebraska State Historical Society. Photo Collection. #M281-72.
Hooker County. Commissioners' Records. Books 1 and 2.
Tracings. Hooker County Courthouse. Oscar R. Kirschke. Clerk's office.
Communication from Frank Harding, local Mullen historian, October 24, 1988.
"Hooker County." Who's Who in Nebraska. Lincoln: Nebraska Press Association, 1940.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property, Hooker County Courthouse, occupies all of Block 5 of the Original Town of Mullen and is roughly 250x250' in size.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city block that has historically been associated with the property.

