

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

For HCERS use only
received **AUG 4 1981**
date entered **SEP 3 1981**

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

1. Name

historic _____

and/or common Schuyler City Hall (CX06-2)

2. Location

street & number 1020 A Street _____ not for publication

city, town Schuyler _____ vicinity of _____ congressional district First

state Nebraska code 31 county Colfax code 37

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 type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial |
| | | <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 City of Schuyler

street & number City Hall

city, town Schuyler _____ vicinity of _____ state Nebraska

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Clerk

street & number Colfax County Courthouse

city, town Schuyler _____ state Nebraska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date On-going _____ federal state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records Nebraska State Historical Society

city, town Lincoln _____ state Nebraska

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 date _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed | | |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Schuyler City Hall is prominently situated on the southeast corner of A Street and East 11th Street in the commercial district of Schuyler (1980 pop. 4557), the county seat of Colfax County. The Colfax County Courthouse is two blocks east of the City Hall and is being nominated simultaneously.

Designed by Joseph P. Guth, the City Hall is a two story, 76' x 44', brick building with a notable corner clock tower. Consistent with medieval traditions and the separate functions of the first and second floors, each level receives a different exterior treatment. The first floor window and door openings were large rectangular openings with a simple treatment, several of these openings have been filled in with brick in recent years. The large garage opening centered on the north was for the fire station. The door in the tower was for the police department; the west entrance provided access to the rest of the building. A stone watertable is placed at the sill level, and the wall below is laid in a battered formation with brick of a different color. The corner tower and corner pavilions project slightly from the building. The brick on all corners is laid in bands. A prominent wall cornice divides first and second floor.

The second floor and corner tower is significantly more decorated. The windows are round-arched and double-hung with a decorated transom. On the north facade and the west projection, there is a grouping of three windows with voussoirs and stringcourses in contrasting colored bricks and out-size keystones. The northeast corner has an oculus window. The parapet is also decorated with bricks in contrasting color.

The height and placement of the corner clock tower make it a visual landmark in Schuyler's commercial area. The multi-storied round-arched panels with windows and louvers repeat the motif of voussoirs in darker-colored bricks. The louvers hide the bell which was used for fire warnings, hourly chimes, and special occasions. A plate on the bell reads "L. M. Rumsey Mfg. Co., St. Louis, Missouri, 1887." There are clock faces on all four sides of the tower, each flanked by recessed panels, and contrasting color bricks highlight the corners and surround the clockface. There is a prominent cornice, and a multi-level parapet crowns the tower. The clock was manufactured by the Seth Thomas Clock Co. of Thomaston, Connecticut, and was installed March, 1909, by the Bohemia Social and Dancing Club, as stated on a plaque on the clock.

The basic room arrangement remains the same. The fire station was housed in the northern half of the first floor in one large room (38' x 30') for trucks and equipment. It is now used by the Rescue Squad. The tower room and the west office in the northern half are the police department rooms. The rest of the first floor is offices. On second floor, the northern half is the community hall (see photo #3) which has embossed tin ceilings and new panelling. The old city council chamber (25' x 16') was in the southwest corner of the building. The original wooden pews remain in the room. The other rooms are offices. Some rooms have been remodelled with new materials, but the floorplan is the same.

The City Hall has remained in constant use as the city's main government building since its construction in 1908-09.

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 type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

Specific dates 1908-09 **-Builder/Architect** Joseph P. Guth, Omaha

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Schuyler City Hall is architecturally important to Nebraska as the best example of a specific type of city hall building: a two-story masonry structure with large openings on first floor for a fire station and a council chamber above, a type which is reminiscent of medieval Italy. A German-born architect, Joseph P. Guth, designed it for this German, Czech, and Irish community.

The oldest government buildings are from Italy in the 12th and 13th centuries, and the type became common in other countries as well. The ground floor was open and often arcaded for an open market, and a large room was on second floor for a town hall and law court (Pevsner, p. 27). Although the market was moved in the late 13th century the arcading remained, and there are examples of open ground floors in Germany, England, and Italy into the 16th and 17th centuries (Pevsner, p. 30; Yarwood, p. 239; and Tiedge, pp. ii-v). The arcading and large openings on first floor remained in spite of the now enclosed space, examples of which are common in 19th century German city halls. In form the Schuyler City Hall resembles these medieval town halls, with large openings on first floor, now for fire station doors, and the city council chamber above. In style the Schuyler City Hall reflects the medieval city halls of northern Italy with prominent clock towers flat roofs, and the emphasis on the parapet and cornice. Examples of these are the Palazzo Vecchio, Florence; Palazzo Pubblico, Siena; and Palazzo del Broletto, Como. The German city halls have open and/or arcaded first floors, corner or centered clock towers, but the roofs were usually steeply-pitched (Kranz-Michaelis, pp. 104-5).

A number of city halls of this type have been identified in Nebraska through the Historic Buildings Survey, and one at Tecumseh is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (see Tecumseh Historic District, Johnson County, Nebraska, NRHP 6-10-75). The type is quite standard: two-story brick or concrete block structure, fire station with large openings on first floor; more exterior decorative elements and council chamber and offices on second; and bell tower, usually centered, on the front (examples with or without bell tower are located at Humphrey, Snyder, Scribner, Bruno, Tecumseh, Linwood, and North Bend). The Schuyler City Hall is the outstanding Nebraska example for this type for the skill of the design and the prominence of the clock/bell tower. This is the only known example of a corner tower, and the only one which includes a clock and a bell. The corner tower is a strong visual landmark which can be seen for several blocks in every direction. It provides a point of focus for the downtown, fitting for a civic structure.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

UMT NOT VERIFIED
ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Schuyler, Ne

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

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| Zone | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 10, 11, 12, Block 98, Original Town Plat, Schuyler, Nebraska

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

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| | | | |

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| | | | |

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Penelope Chatfield, Preservation Historian

organization Nebraska State Historical Society date May, 1981

street & number 1500 R Street telephone 402/471-3850; 471-3270

city or town Lincoln state Nebraska

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Marion D. Knott

7/24/81

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

date

For HCRS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date

9/3/81

for
By
Byers

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**

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|---------------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |
| RECEIVED AUG 4 1981 |
| SEP 3 1981 |
| DATE ENTERED |

CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

The City Council considered plans for a new city hall on July 5, 1907, from three architects, A. H. Dyer, J. Ort, and J. P. Guth, but a difference of opinion among the council members caused the matter to be dropped. On December 20th the plans of Joseph Guth were accepted, and C. F. Kaul was awarded the building contract on May 8, 1908. The cornerstone was laid on July 16th and the building was completed the following April at a cost of \$11,000. Upon completion the building was described: "The citizens of Schuyler are proud of it, both as a public improvement and an object of beauty" (Nebraska State Journal, April 12, 1909).

The community was involved in the plan for and the future use of the building. The Bohemia Social and Dancing Club donated the clock for the tower. The largest room on the second floor was the community room, not the council chamber. At the cornerstone laying, the newspaper reports that the building "will serve the purpose of all public gatherings, offices of the city officials and fire company" (Nebraska State Journal, July 19, 1908).

The architect was Joseph P. Guth, of Omaha, who was born in Germany in 1860 and came to the United States in 1884. He worked in Cleveland for a year or two, and then moved to Omaha where he went into an architectural partnership with Joseph E. Dietrick. After two years, Guth opened his own office, which he operated until his death in 1928. Few examples of his work are currently known. Arriving in this country at the age of 24, he was undoubtedly aware of German city halls. He was probably trained in Germany, because he entered a partnership shortly after his arrival.

The German nativity of the architect and the widespread use of the medieval town hall type in both German and Italian cities suggest that Guth drew on this to design a structure for Schuyler which was probably familiar to a portion of the local population. Germans were proud of their heritage and willingly expressed their pride in the period before the First World War. In contrast the County Courthouse, built in 1922, two blocks down the street, is strictly Renaissance Revival in style. The clock tower is an important feature of both German and Italian town halls, and the clock is strongly emphasized in the Schuyler building. This is the only known example of a clock tower on this type of building in the state. The Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey to date suggests that this building type was more widely used in communities of German and Czech heritage, although additional survey work and research is needed to confirm this suggestion. The Schuyler City Hall remains as the Nebraska building which most closely resembles the medieval town halls in plan and style.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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| DATE ENTERED | |

CONTINUATION SHEET Bibliography ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

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Omaha Evening Bee, April 24, 1928, page 2, "Joseph P. Guth, Architect, Dead."

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