

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 89002213

Date Listed: 1/10/89

First Custer County Courthouse
Property Name

Custer
County

NEBRASKA
State

County Courthouses of Nebraska
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

for Patrick Andrus
Signature of the Keeper

1/10/90
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

The period of significance for this property, 1877-1883, is based on its use as a temporary courthouse. The present condition and setting of the building more accurately reflect its subsequent role as an historic property which was the focus of a local preservation effort in the 1930s. Joni Gilkerson of the Nebraska SHPO agreed that the period of significance should be extended to 1933, the date the building was moved, to include this aspect of its history. The nomination form is officially amended to reflect this change.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NOV 30 1989 2213

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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 First Custer County Courthouse
other names/site number CU06-8

2. Location

street & number Pacific St & Cameron Ave N/A not for publication
city, town Callaway N/A vicinity
state Nebraska code NE county Custer code 041 zip code 68825

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u>2</u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<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. Sanson 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. Patrick Andrews 1/10/90
 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:)

(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) RECREATION & CULTURE/museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions) no style Materials (enter categories from instructions) foundation brick walls wood roof wood other _____

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 Settlement Period of Significance 1877-83 1877-83 Significant Dates N/A N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Significant Person N/A Architect/Builder Young, Milo

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 2 acres

UTM References

A	1: 4	4 2 2 7 4 0	4 5 7 1 4 2 0	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
	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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The First Custer County Courthouse exhibits features of the Property Type, Temporary Courthouse: It is of modest design not intended to convey its standing as a public building, and it was not intended to serve as a permanent courthouse. Logs, an inexpensive, locally available material, were used, including peeled unhewn ones for porch supports. This log building is a rare surviving example of this pioneer method of building. With the relative shortage of wood in this Plains county and the 1880s use of sod construction,¹ the First Custer County Courthouse is a rarity. Built in 1876, the building dates from the early years of the county (established in 1877) and was used as a courthouse until 1883 when Broken Bow became county seat. In 1933 the First Custer County Courthouse was moved to a city park in Callaway where it served as the library until 1960. County residents recognized the symbolic importance of the building to them and acted to preserve it. The former courthouse is now a museum and enjoys a central location in a large well-maintained park. Alterations, including a new foundation and roofline, date from the building's removal in 1933 from the former Young Ranch. Historic users of the building would recognize the First Custer County Courthouse despite the changes.

Two concrete walks diagonally cross Morgan City Park, which occupies a full city block. Modest houses overlook the park. Directly across Davidson Avenue is another city park with such recreational facilities as tennis courts and a swimming pool. Two small brick freestanding walls have wood wagon wheels embedded in them (noncontributing object) and were placed flanking a concrete walk at the northwest corner of the park in 1982, evidence of the continuing interest in the park. The former courthouse is located just north of the park's center. Fine mature deciduous trees, metal park benches, a modest concrete and smooth stone bench, and metal playground equipment are scattered about the park.

Located near the former courthouse are two commemorative objects, a Nebraska State Historical Society/Seven Valley Historical Society plaque describing the importance of the former courthouse and a tribute to World War II veterans. The veterans memorial is a simple granite slab set upon a stepped concrete base; a metal tablet placed on the slab notes that it was "Erected as a lasting tribute to the men and women of this village

¹See three photos from the 1880s showing sod houses in Custer County and reproduced in McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses, p. 87. Photos are by Solomon Butcher, who also photographed this building and prepared a Custer County history.

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who faithfully served in the great global war. They served that right, which is more precious than peace, might prevail." A World War I memorial (a piece of artillery) was removed from the site and donated for scrap iron due to materials shortages during World War II. The veterans memorial and brick entry posts are noncontributing objects due to their recent construction dates. Small objects, including the NSHS plaque and benches, are not counted.

The First Custer County Courthouse is a one-story L-shaped gabled building measuring approximately 27x30' overall, excluding the overhanging porches. The front ell of the building (which retains the original peeled log porch supports) is approximately 15' wide, and the rear ell is around 12' wide. Gable ends extend forward to form entry porches for both ells. Ax marks are visible on the roughly hewn squared logs that are laid up with crudely cut squared joints to form the chinked walls. The logs are reportedly of cedar and came from along Spring Creek on the Young Ranch. Six double-hung windows have a 6/6 pane configuration and are found on all sides of the building. Where windows and doors occur together, on three sides, the window is placed next to the door frame. The red brick chimney is located near the intersection of the two ells.

Before its removal to the park and use as a library, the building had seen residential use and is currently furnished and finished as a nineteenth century house. There are smooth wood floors and simple plaster walls and ceilings added in 1933. When the building was rescued from deterioration and moved to the park for use as a library, a new roof of more permanent and waterproof materials was added as well as the chimney and foundation. This present wood shingle roof replaced a slightly more shallowly pitched one. An historic photograph also showed three sets of antlers festooning the principal gable end.

Saving the First Custer County Courthouse was a community project for residents of the Village of Callaway. The local womens club led in sponsoring a petition calling for preserving the building, and the Village of Callaway Board, Chamber of Commerce and other organizations also joined in. A relative of Milo Young (who built the former courthouse on his ranch in 1876) was then a state representative and agreed to contact other family members. In April 1933 Young descendants granted permission for the old courthouse to be removed from their property. The Young Ranch was located 12 miles east of Callaway, on Section 23, Township 15, Range 22 in Custer County, and the original setting for the courthouse was rural.

J.M. Savidge moved the building in two sections over a two-day period. Stephenson Brothers provided necessary repairs, and W.S. Lattin & Son

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plastered the interior. The move preserved the building, which had long been empty, and symbolized the importance Custer County residents placed upon county organization and government.

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The First Custer County Courthouse is significant under Criterion A (Politics/government and Settlement). The property derives its historic significance as the first focal point for the administration of local government and institutions in Custer County. In addition, it symbolizes stability and governmental control in a newly settled area. A log building, the First Custer County Courthouse is a rare, relatively unaltered example of the Property Type, Temporary Courthouse. As such, it represents an early and important period of governmental service in Custer County. Its modest materials and simple construction demonstrate the temporary nature of this type of county courthouse. The Period of Significance is 1877 (when it was named the courthouse) and 1883 (when the county seat was moved to Broken Bow).

The building is being nominated as an example of the Property Type, County Courthouses of Nebraska (Temporary Courthouse subtype), of the Context, County Government in Nebraska, 1854-1941, from the Multiple Property Submission, County Courthouses of Nebraska. As noted in the last-named document, significant examples of this property type may have been moved to a commemorative park to preserve them and in recognition of their symbolic importance. Under Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) B, the First Custer County Courthouse is the surviving structure most importantly associated with the establishment of county government in the county.

Appreciating the "luxuriant grasses, fine winter range and plenty of water" in the South Loup valley of the Custer County area, ranchers first brought cattle to the area from Texas as early as 1869, according to a 1940 account. The county, one of Nebraska's largest, was the site of early cattle raising on the remote open ranges of the west.

With construction of the Union Pacific Railroad (and therefore the means to ship cattle to eastern markets), Nebraska cattle raising moved rapidly westward in the 1870s, from Schuyler and the Blue River valley to Kearney and then Ogallala. Custer County is north and west of Kearney, and as Olson noted in his history of Nebraska, was a locus of the state's early beef cattle industry, still an important part of the Nebraska economy.

The county was surveyed in 1872 and organized five years later when 13 men signed a petition requesting its establishment. The governor proclaimed the county organized and designated the county seat to be located on the Young Ranch in the southwest part of the county.

Initial settlement occurred in the south part of the county near the

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South Loup River. Among the first occupants was the Milo F. Young family. At the county's first election, held on July 31, 1877, his son Frank Young was elected county clerk (and re-elected in the regular election in November). The Young log ranch house that Milo Young built was designated the first courthouse in the county, and its site the first county seat.

The log courthouse suited the needs of the sparsely population county well in the early settlement years, but with increased settlement across the county came interest in a more centrally located county seat. Custer County is the second largest county in the state and covers 2,592 square miles. In an election held in January 1883, Broken Bow, which was nearer the county's geographic center, won the county seat contest.

The First Custer County Courthouse continued to be used as a house for the Young family for years, but by 1933 was in disrepair and abandoned. Residents of Callaway, a small town incorporated in 1886 when its was thought the railroad would arrive, worked to preserve the old courthouse. Led by the Womens Club and other civic organizations, they secured approval from Milo Young's heirs to move, rehabilitate, preserve, and reuse the log building. Callaway residents converted the former courthouse into a community library, which it remained for nearly thirty years. It now serves as a well-maintained museum.

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- Long, Barbara Beving. "County Courthouses of Nebraska." Multiple Property Submission. 1989.
- Olson, James C. History of Nebraska. 2nd ed. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955.
- Smith, Mrs. Fred (Lorraine), ed. Seven Valleys Regional History. 1872-1982. Callaway: Loup Valley Queen, 1982.
- "Custer County." Who's Who in Nebraska. Lincoln: Nebraska Press Assoc., 1940. Quoting p.206.
- "Cabin Which Became First Custer County Court House is Now Library In Callaway." Lincoln Sunday Journal and Star, July 9, 1933.
- Butcher, Solomon D. Pioneer History of Custer County, Nebraska. n.d. reprint ed., 1976.
- Gaston, W.L. and Humphrey, A.R. History of Custer County, Nebraska. Lincoln: Western Publishing & Engraving Co., 1919.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property occupies the entirety of Morgan Park, which is bounded by Davidson Avenue, Pacific Street, Cameron Avenue, and Adams Street and is roughly 300x300' in size.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city block, Morgan Park, that has been associated with the property since its removal in 1933 from a rural site.

