

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received JUL 18 1985
date entered AUG 15 1985

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

1. Name

historic Big Stone County Courthouse

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number 20 S.E. Second Street N/A not for publication

city, town Ortonville N/A vicinity of ~~congressional district~~

state Minnesota code 22 county Big Stone code 011

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> In process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" 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 Big Stone County

street & number 20 S.E. Second Street

city, town Ortonville N/A vicinity of state Minnesota 56278

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Big Stone County Courthouse

street & number 20 S.E. Second Street

city, town Ortonville state Minnesota 56278

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Minnesota Statewide Historic Sites Survey title has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes no

date 1983-84 ___ federal state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office, Fort Snelling History Center

city, town St. Paul state Minnesota 55111

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Big Stone County Courthouse, completed in 1902, is located at the southeast corner of S.E. Second Street and Jackson Avenue at the south end of Ortonville's business district. The courthouse is set into a hill with a commanding view of main street and Big Stone Lake. A five foot tall rockfaced purple granite retaining wall runs along the front of the property, and the courthouse is surrounded by commercial buildings across the street to the north and west, a two level county parking lot to the east, and a small park area to the south which contains stone Civil War and World War I memorials.

The Big Stone County Courthouse was designed by Fremont D. Orff of Minneapolis and constructed by Stillwater builder Ole H. Olsen. The building has a restrained, symmetrical design and is faced with light brown pressed brick with rockfaced Ortonville granite trim. The courthouse has a slate-covered hipped roof with projecting gables on the north, west, and south facades. The five bay main facade is dominated by a slightly projecting, central two story entrance bay containing the main entrance set within a large rockfaced granite arch. The arch is topped by granite modillions, a smooth granite name and date panel, and a trio of narrow rectangular window openings with rockfaced granite sills, lintels, and keystones, a heavy galvanized iron cornice with modillions, a two story polygonal staircase bay projecting from the north facade, and a tall exterior chimney on the south facade.

The interior of the building contains a dramatic central rotunda that rises from the first floor to the peak of the roof. The ceiling of the rotunda contains an eight-sided dome-like vault with eight curving stained glass panels and an octagonal stained glass oculus. Beneath the base of the vault are four tall rounded arches supporting an embellished plaster entablature. Three of the rounded arches serve as openings to the second story corridors, and the fourth contains a hand painted mural with a farming scene entitled "L' Etoile du Nord". Above the rounded arches are painted symbols entitled "Law", "Peace", "Justice", and "Liberty". The rotunda is further enhanced with an ornate plaster cornice at the top of the first story and a tile floor.

The courthouse was originally designed to house county offices on the first floor, a courtroom, jury and witness rooms, judges' chambers, and the county attorney's office on the second floor, and vaults, storage rooms, restrooms, offices, and the heating plant in the basement. This arrangement of rooms has changed very little. The interior of the building retains maple flooring, oak woodwork and original furnishings, brass fixtures, and a large oak staircase with turned balusters. The second story courtroom has original oak furniture, plaster medallions on the ceiling, and Art Deco light fixtures.

The Big Stone County Courthouse is basically intact and in excellent condition. During recent years a small concrete block service entrance was added to the southeast corner of the building. In the 1970's the County embarked on a \$100,000 renovation project which involved installing new windows to replace the original l/l sash, installing new doors on the north and main facades, cleaning and repointing the brickwork, repainting the interior, refinishing the interior woodwork, and installing new carpeting. The building continues to be well maintained.

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 1902 **Builder/Architect** Fremont D. Orff, architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Ole H. Olsen, builder

The Big Stone County Courthouse, completed in 1902 at 20 S.E. Second Street in Ortonville, is historically and architecturally significant as one of Minnesota's diminishing number of monumental Victorian courthouses, as the largest Victorian building standing in Big Stone County, as an example of the work of successful Minneapolis architect Fremont D. Orff, and as the building which has served as the seat of government in Big Stone County since the turn of the century.

Big Stone County, located at the South Dakota border along the shores of Big Stone Lake, was established by the Minnesota legislature in 1862. In 1874 a county government was formed, but its authority was later challenged and it was not until 1881 that the county government was legally established. Voters formally approved Ortonville as the county seat in the spring of 1881. County officials conducted business from their homes until October of 1882 when a \$3,500 woodframe courthouse and jail building was completed. On October 31, 1885, the building was destroyed by fire but, fortunately, legal records were protected in a fireproof vault which had been installed in the building three months earlier. In the spring of 1886 a new woodframe courthouse was completed on the same site. In 1895 the county expanded its facilities by constructing a granite jail building at Jackson Avenue and Third Street, just east of the site of the present courthouse.

In 1901 plans to replace the modest 1886 courthouse resulted in a decision to construct a new brick courthouse adjacent to the jail. Voters approved a \$30,000 bond issue in July of 1901 and the contract for construction was awarded two months later to the low bidder, Ole H. Olsen of Stillwater. Architect for the project was Fremont D. Orff of Minneapolis. The new courthouse was completed during the summer of 1902. Since then, the building has housed all facets of Big Stone County government. The county's previous woodframe courthouse was deeded to the local school district for use as a classroom and eventually demolished in 1918. The 1895 jail building was demolished during the 1940's. Since that time prisoners have been transferred to facilities in Wilkin County and, more recently, Stearns and Lac Qui Parle counties.

Fremont D. Orff, architect of the courthouse, was born in Maine in 1838, educated in Boston, and moved to Minneapolis in 1879. He practiced in Minneapolis alone and with various partners including his brother George W. Orff, Edgar Joralemon, and an architect named Guilbert. Orff maintained a successful practice in Minneapolis until circa 1914. His Minnesota designs include courthouses in Waseca County (1897, with Joralemon, now on the National Register), Renville County (1902), and Red Lake County (1910, on the National Register), the Little Falls Public Library (1905), and many houses and commercial buildings in the Twin Cities. Orff also designed the Polk County Courthouse in Balsam Lake, Wisconsin (1899, with Guilbert), and the Bayfield County Courthouse in Washburn, Wisconsin (with Joralemon).

The Big Stone County Courthouse was included in a fifteen month historic sites survey of seven west central Minnesota counties conducted in 1983–84 by the State Historic Preservation Office. The survey staff identified the building as being the largest turn of the century building standing in Big Stone County and as one of the county's best examples of large scale Victorian architecture.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Northwest Architectural Archives, Fremont D. Orff File, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.
Sparrow, Magdalene. Big Stone County, 1881-1981. Ortonville, 1981.
Sparrow, Magdalene. Unpublished research on courthouse. Ortonville, Minnesota.
Big Stone County Auditor's Office. Original architect's plans.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Ortonville Quad.

Quadrangle scale 7.5

UMT References

A

1	4	7	0	0	4	0	1	0	5	1	9	7	1	4	1	0
Zone			Easting				Northing									

B

Zone			Easting				Northing									

C

Zone			Easting				Northing									

D

Zone			Easting				Northing									

E

Zone			Easting				Northing									

F

Zone			Easting				Northing									

G

Zone			Easting				Northing									

H

Zone			Easting				Northing									

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 1, 2, 3, and Lot 4 except the southeasterly 8½ feet, Block 23, Original Plat of Ortonville.

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Granger, Field Assistant

organization State Historic Preservation Office
Minnesota Historical Society

date June 1984

street & number Fort Snelling History Center

telephone (612) 726-1171

city or town St. Paul

state Minnesota 55111

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Russell W. Fridley

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 6/27/85

For NPS use only

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

For Nelson Byer
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 8-15-85

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date