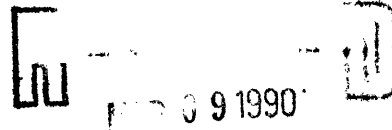


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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties... See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms...

1. Name of Property

historic name Larimore City Hall
other names/site number Larimore Opera House

2. Location

street & number Block 64, bounded by Towner, 3rd, Terry & Main
city, town Larimore
state North Dakota code ND county Grand Forks code 035 zip code 58251

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/site/structure/object categories.

Name of related multiple property listing:
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.
Signature of certifying official James E. Sperry, State Historic Preservation Officer (North Dakota) Date 2/8/90

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation 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:
[checked] entered in the National Register.
[] determined eligible for the National Register.
[] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[] removed from the National Register.
[] other, (explain:)
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government

City Hall

Social

Meeting Hall

Education

Library, Class Room

Recreation & Culture

Music Facility

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Culture

Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls brick

wood

roof asphalt (current)

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Larimore City Hall and Opera House is centered on an entire city block surrounded by both deciduous and evergreen trees. It's present appearance is the result of two phases of alteration and remodelling, changes which, with only minimal loss of original fabric, have remained faithful to the original form and design. All alterations are at least fifty years old and are regarded as part of the historical evolution of the building.

The most recent changes, undertaken by the WPA in 1938 at a cost of \$4259.00, transformed the building's stylistic presentation into one of simple Georgian Revivalism. The original design did not conform to any specific stylistic category, but employed an eclectic format typical of the period. Eclectic features include the broad arched entry, Colonial style windows with fan lights, truncated spire, and the Chinese fretwork style balconies which were removed early in the life of the building.

At the time of construction in 1890, two buildings were planned: a two story City Hall with offices on the first floor and a ball room on the second, and a two story Engine House (since demolished) that would supply electricity for the complex. Originally, the City Hall's clock tower extended almost twice the height of the cornice line and was capped by a truncated spire. Unlike the brick veneer of the lower building, this feature was clad with narrow lap wood siding from the cornice upward. Sometime before 1930, the spire was removed and the tower was finished with a crenelated cap which gave the building somewhat of a Gothic appearance. Though the cause for removal of the spire is not known, it is speculated that the wood construction was susceptible to structural failure, fire or water damage. Other components long since removed include the tall smoke stacks that originally sprouted from four corners of the roof, and the decorative braced window balconies of a fretwork design that were located beneath the three arched windows of the main facade.

Today, the City Hall may be described as a two and a half story rectangular structure of red-painted buff brick which rises to a hipped roof. The principal facade is a symmetrical arrangement with arched entry, and overlying paired sash containing stained glass. Flanking the tower bay are identical paired sash headed with arched fan lights. The main entry is contained within the slightly projecting bay which transcends both stories and finishes into what now appears as a shallow gabled dormer. The dormer features the original hooded arched window. Interiors have

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remained largely untouched and feature original maple hardwood floors and other woodwork around doors and staircases. The original floor plan, which accomodated a second story ballroom with raised stage and first floor office spaces, has been preserved.

The subtle stylistic makeover achieved with WPA funds gave new emphasis to the Georgian Revival qualities of the design. These rennovations called for further reduction of the tower into a shallow gabled dormer. All original openings and windows were retained on the main facade, however window openings on remaining facades were reduced to accomodate smaller sash. The most significant infill occurred to the broad arched window located at the second story of both the north and south facades. Because of time elapsed, and because most original fabric remains to convey a stature as Larimore's historic center of local government these alterations do not detract from the building's eligibility. By the 1960s, the City Hall had ceased to function as the centerpiece of local government and was threatened with demolition. Community groups immediately rallied to save the building. Reorganized as the Larimore Community Museum and Historical Association, the group agreed to asssume repair and maintenance costs as the facility was adaptively converted for use as the Larimore Community Museum.

8. Statement of Significance

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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)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Politics/Government
Architecture
Social History

1890-1939 (1970)

Dec. 19, 1890

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

Ross, J.W., Architect

Moran, M.J., Contractor

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

The Larimore City Hall is being nominated under Criterion A for its multi-functional role in the city's governmental, cultural, social, educational and recreational development. More than any other building surviving from Larimore's founding years, the city hall has been the scene of numerous events and processes that have contributed to Larimore's civic and economic growth. Five years after the City Hall's construction in 1890, the building was dubbed the Larimore Opera House to reflect it's new offerings of stage productions and concert events. Toward this function, the City Council purchased lighting fixtures, stoves, furniture, stage scenery and 240 auditorium seats from a Chicago company.¹ For eighty years, the building has provided working space for every conceivable organization including churches, schools, public library, fraternal societies, military functions, political groups and youth organizations such as the Boy Scouts and Girls Scouts.

Larimore School District 44 became a regular user of the second floor of the City Hall for plays, graduation ceremonies and assemblies, at times, basketball games. Since some church denominations were without a building, they rented space to hold services, while others requested use of the city hall for bingo and auctions. Both floor have provided an area for many dances held in the community, and at least one funeral service was held in the building. In addition, the second floor was used as a roller skating rink, and in the late 1950s served as the Edna J. Ralston Public Library.² One function of the City Hall remained constant. City Council Chambers, as well as mayoral, judicial and administrative offices were housed in the building from December 24, 1890 until December 16, 1970, when all services were moved to a new building.

As the first brick structure and oldest surviving civic building left in the community, the building marks the progression of Larimore from a struggling rail stop to a major center of railroad maintenance and administration. By 1881, principal rail lines connecting Grand Forks and points east had embraced Larimore. This railroad activity was expected to continue with the eventual building of north to south rail lines, a project that never materialized. As with many communities in North Dakota, patterns of

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acres of property Less than one acre (building)

UTM References

A

1	4
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6	0	2	1	8	0
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5	3	0	6	5	7	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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 Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The Larimore City Hall is located in the center of the 300 foot by 300 foot Block 64 of the City of Larimore, ND which is in the northeast quadrant of Larimore Township 151 N, Range 55 W.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city lot which has been, and still is a city park.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By Lauren McCroskey, Architectural Historian

name/title William Storm Curator, Larimore Community Museum/Historical Association
 organization State Historical Society of ND date February 6, 1990
 street & number ND Heritage Center, 612 E. Blvd Ave telephone (701)224-2672
 city or town Bismarck state ND zip code 58505

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building activity and urban settlement were dependent upon the events of railroad expansion. Indeed, many towns were snuffed out by the logistical decisions of railroads who chose to bypass them, while other communities experienced tremendous growth spurts brought on by fortuitous hook-ups with major trackage. Before the turn of the century, Larimore's longevity was secured with the establishment of headquarters of the Dakota Division of the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad (later renamed the Great Northern, under James J. Hill).³

The Division headquarters first occupied Larimore between 1887-1894. During this period, the scant number of construction projects reveals that the presence of the Dakota Division gave little spark to business ventures or building activity. After 1884, the headquarters abandoned Larimore, only to reestablish itself after the depot and freight house burned down in 1896. This time, the company occupation was attended by a marked boom in the construction of civic and railroad-related buildings. A new two story brick depot succeeded the wood frame facility destroyed by fire. Other railroad-related construction included a roundhouse, coal chute, and many lesser buildings. Residential as well as commercial and civic building also followed this trend.⁴ The building of a substantial number of two story houses reflects the prosperity of a period when the location of the Division headquarters meant a sudden boost in population and new pressures to house the increasing number of railroad employees. Built in 1890, the City Hall/Opera House belongs to this era, a period in which brick construction as a symbol of prosperity and permanence replaced the vulnerable wood clad structures of earlier years.

Meeting the values of Criterion C, the City Hall is locally significant as representative of early civic architecture in Larimore, and for its association with Depression era Federal relief programs. The current appearance of the Larimore Opera House is largely a product of a WPA remodelling campaign which occurred in 1938.⁵ By this time, the most dramatic change had already been made with a reduction of the spire to a crenelated square crown, the date and cause of which are unknown. With little impact to existing fabric, the building's facades were given a simple Georgian Revival appearance with further truncation of the tower into a shallow gabled dormer, and with the use of white paint on dark-toned window frames and muntins to emphasize their Colonial configuration. In addition, the buff brick veneer was painted red to enhance the Colonial theme; previously recessed mortar joints were repointed and made almost flush with surrounding brick. Judging from a state inventory of Federal relief projects designed almost exclusively in either the Craftsman or Art Deco/Moderne style, the use of a Georgian theme for a WPA project is unusual for North Dakota.

Adding to the City Hall's architectural significance is the distinction of its design by the area's first licensed architect, John W. Ross of nearby Grand Forks. Trained in Wisconsin, Ross began his practice in 1880 and was regarded as "architect of the principle business buildings and blocks in the city of Grand Forks."⁶ Without

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competition until the turn of the century, Ross received most major commissions. The record of his work in Grand Forks is frayed, with only one of his brick designs remaining in the central business district. The last years of his practice are better represented in such works as the Grand Forks City Hall, a handsome Beaux Arts theme of limestone and other materials. While it may be speculated that the Larimore building is Ross's earliest subject of city hall design, it can at least be concluded that the building is the first expression of his career in Larimore.

In addition to historical values already discussed, the city hall is also cited for significance as a regional property type. It has been observed that several buildings which served the dual functions of opera house and local government are found in North Dakota, Montana and the Canadian Provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba.⁷ Unlike the typical single function operation of most city hall buildings, these interiors were designed to house both town/city hall government and opera and theater productions. Often called Opera Houses by locals, these buildings more accurately resembled auditoriums and featured attached fire halls. As is true of the Larimore building, floor space toward the front of the building was usually configured for office space, while the bulk of the first or upper story contained an open plan with hall and raised stage.

A preliminary investigation has identified six known structures of this type in the cities of Williston, Jamestown, Breckenridge (Minnesota), Enderlin, Drayton and Larimore. Because the city hall/opera house genre has been found in communities of differing size with varying historical economic resources, it cannot yet be concluded that this fusion of operations was simply a frugal approach to municipal building projects. Rather, it is speculated that this dual function building is a distinctive property type of regional or ethnic/cultural derivation. Some research suggests that the city hall/opera house type may have origins in Eastern Anglo Saxon building traditions of New England, and the eastern Canadian provinces.⁸ However, at this time, the distribution of this property type has not been plotted by means of a systematic approach or research design. Because the Larimore City Hall/Opera House contributes to a definite known property type which has yet to be thoroughly investigated for regional/cultural affiliation, further study of this and other subjects may reveal regional patterns of occurrence and criteria for evaluation.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY/NOTES

- 1 City of Larimore, Seven books containing minutes of the meetings of the Larimore City government, March 15, 1883-December 15, 1950.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 H.V. Arnold, Reference Book To The Business and Residential Buildings of Larimore, North Dakota, 1921. pp. 14-15.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Report of WPA and Sponsors Expenditures Previous to Feb. 1, 1938, N.D.
- 6 Norene Roberts, Multiple Resources Nomination of Grand Forks, 1981. Section 8, p. 18.
- 7 Terry Sinclair, Researcher, Heritage Branch, Saskatchewan Multi-Culturalism and Recreation, interview, November 1989.
- 8 Ibid.