

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

2223

NOV 23 1989

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 Burt County Courthouse
other names/site number BT06-22

2. Location

street & number 13th St bet M & N Sts N/A not for publication
city, town Tekamah N/A vicinity
state Nebraska code NE county Burt code 021 zip code 68061

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> </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>1</u>	<u>1</u> objects
		<u>2</u>	<u>1</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.

Janet Harrison
Signature of certifying official

November 7, 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 Andrews

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) Beaux Arts Materials (enter categories from instructions) foundation stone
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 1916-39 Significant Dates N/A
1916-17

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Significant Person N/A Architect/Builder Rose and Peterson

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 acre

UTM References

A	<u>1</u> <u>14</u>	<u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>11</u> <u>0</u> <u>3</u> <u>10</u>	<u>4</u> <u>16</u> <u>12</u> <u>18</u> <u>7</u> <u>13</u> <u>10</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> <u> </u>	
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
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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 8, 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 1916-17, the Burt County Courthouse is a good, essentially unaltered example of the Property Type, County Citadel. Identifying features include: rectangular shape, centered entrance, costly materials, distinctive ornamentation, Beaux Arts stylistic influence, 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, ground level entries and appearance of a raised basement, and designed by an architect. It is quite similar to the Box Butte Courthouse (1913-14) by the same architectural firm.

The Burt County Courthouse in Tekamah is a compact rectangular four-story block. Entrances on the west, north, and south facades are tucked beneath massive engaged columns in slightly projecting pavilions. The entries open directly onto the first floor, but the rusticated stone gives the effect of a raised basement. The west facade is the primary entrance. The rear or east facade continues the materials and general treatment of the other facades, but in a simplified manner, and there are no engaged columns.

At the main entrance a foyer leads to the main lobby space, which has north and south corridors off it. Within the foyer space but facing the lobby are stairs leading to the second floor, where offices of county government (such as clerk and treasurer) are located. Two small corridors connect the foyer with the lobby. The first level was designed for the county assessor, surveyor, sheriff, restrooms, and the "farmers assembly room." The third floor is the location of the district courtroom and related offices. The jail is on the fourth floor

Elements of the Beaux Arts style displayed here include the pronounced cornice, large engaged columns, rusticated basement effect, and prominent ornamental detail. Of particular note are the Corinthian engaged columns that are only fluted for half the shaft, broad smooth lintels, and also the three heavy carved consoles at the west entrance. Tan brick contrasts well with limestone trim.

Interior treatment is rich and varied: marble wainscoting, ceramic tile, dark woodwork, ornate plaster details (egg-and-dart courses, foliated consoles), and wrought iron stairs and railings. An important feature is the two-story well of the inner lobby which highlights a mosaic tile seal of the "Great State of Nebraska" on the first floor.

Interior changes are minor and expected: lowered ceilings with flush

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fluorescent lighting (in the district courtroom and offices but not in hallways). Original plans show a stained glass skylight in the courtroom, which, if built, has been covered over. Comparison with an historic photograph shows no significant changes to the exterior. Transoms have been covered on some original windows. Unlike most Nebraska courthouses, this example still has its original wood exterior doors.

The 65x85' courthouse is centered on the east part of a half block that is north of downtown Tekamah, as shown on a 1923 Sanborn fire insurance map. Dwellings occupy the rest of the block, and a large school is across the street. Few objects occur on the courthouse site. A tank has been placed on the south lawn, and a simple granite memorial dedicated in 1931 to the long history of the county is centered on the main entrance. Because of its age and prominent location, the granite memorial was counted as a contributing object for this nomination. The more recent tank is a noncontributing object.

Concrete walkways curve nicely from the northwest and southwest corners of the site to the main entrance, and smaller walks curve from the northeast and southeast to the north and south entrances. Straight walks run east and west and connect the curving walks. A pair of walks also run past the memorial to the main entrance. A variety of deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs (including two large ones at the front) dot the grounds.

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The Burt 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 Burt County. It is a fine example of public architecture in the community and contains good examples of design features and facilities distinctive to its design and use as a courthouse.

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 Beaux Arts stylistic influence. 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 1916, when construction began, to 1939, when the "fifty year rule" takes effect. The Burt 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.

Burt County is located along the Missouri River north of Omaha. With this riverfront location, the county was among the earliest organized in the state (then territory) of Nebraska and was established in 1854. That same year a group of settlers, including town founder Benjamin R. Folsom, had settled in present Tekamah. As the principal settlement in the county, Tekamah was named county seat in 1855, the same year it incorporated.

Indian attack was considered a threat during this period, and the Tekamah settlers sought military assistance in 1855. A small two-story fort or block house was then built of logs. Located on the southwest corner of the present courthouse site, the block house doubled as the courthouse from 1857 to 1867, and later was used as a hotel until 1917. A two-story hipped roof courthouse was built in 1878 to replace the block house and was used until the present facility was built. Both the block house and courthouse are shown on an 1886 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.

As noted in the Multiple Property Submission, a dispute arose over the location of the courthouse within the county seat in 1878--whether it

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should be north or south of the creek. The issue provoked such bitterness that when the courthouse was completed, "safes and office furniture were removed secretly at night" to the new building, according to a 1903 local history.

The 1878 courthouse and its 1916-17 replacement were built on a site north of the creek. Plans for a new construction dated from 1913, when county residents submitted a petition asking for a \$100,000 tax levy for a new courthouse and jail. The county board agreed with the proposal and took steps to levy the tax. Others in the county opposed the idea and sued, taking the matter to the state supreme court. In June 1914 the Nebraska Supreme Court ruled that such levies were unconstitutional if the electorate was not allowed to vote on whether to levy the tax. (The ruling had repercussions for at least one other Nebraska county, Webster, which had adopted the same funding technique.)

The Burt County board worked to secure funding for a new courthouse. In mid-July 1914 they decided to hold an election on a \$70,000 tax levy as soon as possible. By mid-August the task had been completed, and county coffers began to legally fill with taxes for the County Court House and Jail Fund.

Meanwhile, preliminary construction plans began. On June 25, 1914, the board met with architects who were competing for the project. They were William F. Gernandt, Lloyd Willis, both of Omaha, Mr. Burkhead of Sioux City, Iowa, and Mr. Rose of Rose and Peterson, of Kansas City, Kansas, the successful competitor. Rose and Peterson also designed the Box Butte County Courthouse in Alliance, Nebraska, which was built in 1913-14. No Kansas courthouses by them are listed in a Kansas State Historical Society catalog of the state's older courthouses, and no other information is known about them.¹

The reasons for the delay are unclear, but no further action appears to have occurred until March 1916. The board may have chosen to act conservatively and collect sufficient taxes before proceeding with the new building. On March 15, 1916, they board determined that \$70,000 was an insufficient amount to pay for the quality of building they wanted. An election was held the following month that approved an additional tax levy.

On August 15, 1916, the board selected F.P. Gould & Son, Inc. of Omaha

¹Julie Wortman and David Johnson, "Legacies: Kansas' Older County Courthouses." Kansas State Historical Society, 1981.

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to be general contractor. Their bid was \$64,533 and they agreed to finish by July 1, 1917. Construction continued through 1916 and into 1917. On October 2, 1917, the board advertised for bids to remove the old frame courthouse and a privy, a reflection that the new courthouse was ready for occupancy. (The rather incomplete county records show no formal acceptance of the completed building.)

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Long, Barbara Beving. "County Courthouses of Nebraska." Multiple Property Submission. 1989.

Burt County. Commissioners' Records. Books 6 and 7.

Tekamah, Nebraska. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. 1886, 1923.

Nebraska State Historical Society. Photo Collection. #M281-932.

Cornerstone. Burt County Courthouse.

Tracings. Burt County Courthouse. Clerk's office.

"The Old Block House." Framed historical information hanging in district courtroom.

Ott Bros., comp. Noteworthy Men of Tekamah and Vicinity. Tekamah: Journal Press, 1903. (Quoted.)

"Burt County." Who's Who in Nebraska. Lincoln: Nebraska Press Association, 1940.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property, Burt County Courthouse, occupies lots 3, 4, 5, and 6 of Block 90 of the Original Town of Tekamah.

Boundary Justification

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

