

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PHO 684 741

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RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

DEC 22 1976

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Lafayette County Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

626 Main Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Darlington

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Third

VICINITY OF

STATE

Wisconsin

CODE

55

COUNTY

Lafayette

CODE

065

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERICAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

County of Lafayette

STREET & NUMBER

626 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Darlington

VICINITY OF

STATE

Wisconsin 53530

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Lafayette County Register of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

626 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Darlington

STATE

Wisconsin 53530

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places

DATE

1976

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

CITY, TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin 53706

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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

APPEARANCE

The Lafayette County Courthouse is one of two buildings occupying Darlington's courthouse square, a city lot measuring 264 feet on each side. City schools occupy the lot directly across Main Street to the east, and residential structures occupy the remaining facing blocks.

The courthouse itself dominates Darlington's skyline and is approximately centered in the lot, though the main facade is shifted twenty feet north of the center of the block, probably to clear the existing structures on the site during construction. In plan, the building is approximately 110 feet across and 80 feet deep. The three-story courthouse is rectangular in plan with an Ionic, distyle-in-antis, advancing pedimented portico including the main, second-level, entry on the east facade. The exterior walls are of buff limestone ashlar construction with rusticated quoins and having a classical balustrade serving as a roof parapet. The roof is hipped and on center is a tall, staged cupola. The first stage has Ionic colonettes framing four windows facing the cardinal points and rusticated limestone quoins. Clock faces top each window. The second stage, octagonal in plan, contains eight louvered ventilation panels. The convex octagonal roof at the top of the cupola is of copper weathered characteristic green and has eight diminutive bull's-eye windows in small dormers.

The main entrance is framed with Ionic columns holding a classical entablature, all framing a semi-circular arched doorway. One gains access through the doorway after mounting eighteen broad stairs. On center above the doorway is a tripartite, stained-glass window in a segmental-arched opening. Clearly, the main entry received much of the architect's attention during design of the building.

In the entablature above the entrance the words "LAFAYETTE COUNTY COURTHOUSE" are incised into the soft limestone. In the pediment above this is a relief sculpture of a man's head surrounded by classical ornamental details.

The cupola allows natural light to flood through an interior stained-glass circular skylight of soft yellow-ochre glass panels highlighted with small classical details in strong blues and greens. A brown-and-dark-yellow Greek meander of stained glass surrounds the composition. The skylight is among the richest to be found in the state's courthouses and allows light to illuminate one of the handsomest and most colorful courthouse interiors in Wisconsin.

Sunlight is allowed to penetrate to the bottom level of the courthouse through an opaque-glass grid serving as the floor of the second (main) level. A circular well on the floor of the third level provides a two-story space reaching to the skylight. This central space is the dramatic highlight of the interior. The second level of this area has marble wainscoting and pilasters. The hexagonal-tile floor is interrupted by the large, square, glass grid illuminating the floor below. In the ceiling the circular light well, surrounded by exposed incandescent bulbs, permits a view of the dramatic third level. The light well, at the third level, is surrounded by an ornamental wrought-iron railing. Four fluted-Ionic triumphal arches

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

7. DESCRIPTION (continued)

face the cardinal points and are connected by spandrels that change the square form to a circular one supporting the skylight. In the four spandrels may be found murals that depict Justice, Equality, Courage, and Liberty. The interior is rendered in soft greens and yellows of varying tones highlighted by gold-leaf accents in details. Natural woodwork frames door openings. The ornamental stairway connecting these two levels has a landing behind the stained-glass east window mentioned earlier.

The courtroom is in excellent and original condition, and is quite ornate for a small courthouse. Recessed ceiling panels frame an elaborate central panel with gilt accents and a suspended ornamental light fixture. A large mural depicting a winged Justice is found on a side wall opposite pedimented windows. Behind the large, wood bench are found two cherubs flanking the inscription, "The liberty of a people consists in being governed by laws which they have made themselves."

The second building on the courthouse square is behind the courthouse in the southwest corner of the site. It is the county jail and is in a two-story brick building, very residential in appearance, with Queen Anne influences. It was built between 1894 and 1900 according to Sanborn maps of the city. ~~_____~~

The west (rear) facade of the courthouse is relatively plain in appearance and looks over a surface parking lot behind the building.

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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1905 (Cornerstone) BUILDER/ARCHITECT Kinney & Detweiler, Minneapolis

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Lafayette County Courthouse is significant in the architectural history of Wisconsin because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a period of construction and in that it represents the work of a historically important architectural firm. The courthouse is significant to the history of Lafayette County as a focus of civic pride and identity, having housed the seat of county government for three-quarters of a century.

Architecture. The courthouse is an example of the type and quality of relatively abstract neo-classicism found in midwestern county courthouse designs of the first decade of the twentieth century. It is a particularly excellent example of this period, especially in that the interior is relatively unaltered compared to other such buildings and of unusual elaborateness. The indigenous buff limestone construction, a material once frequently used in southwestern Wisconsin, is also significant.

The architect for the building was Kinney and Detweiler (Menno S. Detweiler and Frank W. Kinney) of Minneapolis. The firm disbanded shortly before the courthouse was built, and had previously designed the Langlade County Courthouse in Antigo, an entry on the National Register of Historic Places.

The association of Kinney with Detweiler was apparently brief, lasting from 1902 to 1905. While together, they also designed county courthouses for Beltrami County in Bemidji, Minnesota, and Brown County in Aberdeen, South Dakota. Upon splitting up, the two architects formed new partnerships and continued courthouse design.

The association of Stebbins, Kinney and Halden may have lasted for one or few commissions, executing the McLeod County Courthouse in Glencoe, Minnesota, in 1909. Kinney and Halden formed a two-year-long partnership in 1909 and 1910, but their other buildings are not currently known.

Perhaps more successful was the firm of Bell and Detweiler, formed when Detweiler joined the prolific architect Charles E. Bell. They designed the Grant County Courthouse in Elbow Lake, Minnesota, built in 1906; the Marshall County Courthouse in Britton, South Dakota; the Martin County Courthouse in Fairmont, Minnesota, built in 1906; and the Lawrence County Courthouse in Deadwood, South Dakota. This firm also designed the South Dakota State Capitol in Pierre, built in 1905 to 1907. Detweiler, however, died in 1906, terminating a brief partnership with Bell. Bell went on to design more courthouses by himself, including the Brown County Courthouse in Green Bay, Wisconsin, built in 1908 to 1910 and now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Behm, Joah A. History of Lafayette County. Darlington, 1948.
 Darlington Junior High School. Scrapbook of Darlington History. Date unknown.
 Murphy, Loyola James. Southwestern Wisconsin: A History of Old Crawford County.
 Chicago: Clarke, 1932. (Pp. 591-623 deal with Lafayette County.)
 Perrin, Richard, Gordon D. Orr Jr., and Jeffrey M. Dean. Historic Wisconsin
 Architecture. Milwaukee: Wisconsin Society of Architects, 1976.
 (Page 28, building #29.)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.60

QUADRANGLE NAME Darlington, Wisconsin

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	5	7	3	6	1	1	1	0	4	7	2	9	3	8	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

The courthouse block is bounded by Main Street on the east, West Catherine Street on the south, Washington Street on the west, and West Harriet Street on the north.

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

Jeff Dean and David Donath, Historic Preservation Division

ORGANIZATION

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE

May 1978

STREET & NUMBER

816 State Street

TELEPHONE

608/262-9504

CITY OR TOWN

Madison,

STATE

Wisconsin 53706

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

Richard A. Erney

TITLE Richard A. Erney, Director
 State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE 12/14/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

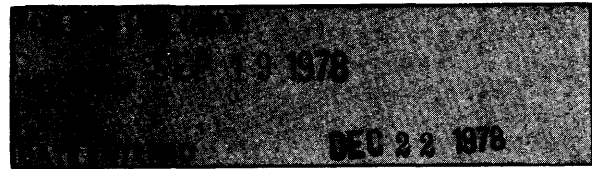
ATTEST *[Signature]*
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
[Signature]
 CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 12-22-78

DATE 12-20-78

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

8. SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

In terms of the urban landscape, the Darlington courthouse sits on top of a hill (see USGS topography). Its towering cupola, thus further elevated, dominates the city's skyline and serves as a visual landmark for miles.

History. A Lafayette County courthouse has been on this city block since 1861. The first courthouse was sited in the southeast corner of the lot facing east. It was a three-story stone structure with a bell tower. By 1900 a small stone office building stood north of the old courthouse, also facing east. The county jail, in the southwest corner of the lot facing south, was built in the late 1890s. Early in the 20th century, the original county courthouse and office building proved inadequate and more space was required. Funding for the new structure, however, was unusual.

During the Civil War a fund had been raised by subscription to provide for widows and others affected by the conflict. It was placed in trust with a commission of county citizens, but was never used. When the federal government assumed care of the war's victims, the fund was not needed for its original purpose. An attempt to return the funds to the original subscribers proved impossible. Later in the century, many of the original trustees died, leaving the fund in the hands of Matthew Murphy of New Diggings. A cautious investor, Murphy shepherded the fund through the balance of the century, but became concerned that it be used before his death. He determined to use the fund to build a needed courthouse for his county, and added to it personal funds of his own. (No breakdown between the amount of trust funds and Murphy's personal funds is available.) The building's cornerstone credits Murphy with "giving" the building to the county, and in many ways this is true. He husbanded the trust to provide for this building, and then made up the shortfall to equal the \$136,500 needed finally to build the structure.