

MINNESOTA HISTORIC PROPERTIES INVENTORY FORM

HISTORIC NAME: Wilkin County Courthouse

COUNTY: Wilkin **APR 15 1980**

CURRENT NAME: Same

CITY/TWP.: Breckenridge

LEGAL DESC.: Block 245, Original Plat

ADDRESS: 316 S. 5th Street

CLASSIFICATION:

Building X
 Structure _____
 Object _____
 District _____

CONDITION:

Excellent X
 Good _____
 Fair _____
 Deteriorated _____

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local X
 State _____
 National _____

THEME/S:

Primary Architecture
 Secondary Politics/govern-
 Others ment

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: Yes X No _____ Restricted _____
 VISIBLE FROM THE ROAD: Yes X No _____
 OCCUPIED: Yes X No _____

PRESENT USE:
 Courthouse

DATE CONSTRUCTED: 1928-29

ORIGINAL USE: Courthouse

ORIGINAL OWNER: Wilkin County

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Buechner & Orth, St. Paul

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS: Wilkin County
 Breckenridge, MN

ACREAGE: Less than one acre 1-3

LOCAL CONTACT/ORG.:

UTM REFERENCE:
 14 / 685970 / 5125590
 Wahpeton 7.5 quad.

FORM PREPARED BY: Tom Harvey
 DATE: September 1979

DESCRIPTION:

The Wilkin County Courthouse is centered on a full city block, surrounded by spacious lawns, a few blocks south of Breckenridge's business district. The two-story brick building has a high raised basement (in effect the first floor) of Bedford, Indiana limestone. The rectangular plan, BeauxArts/City Beautiful building has a flat roof that disguises the existence of an interior central dome.

Broad steps lead up to the west side main entrance. Double bronze doors are surmounted by a transom window, a stone cornice supported by flanking pilasters, and a carved stone eagle. There is a covered, rear basement-level entrance and another basement (ground floor) entrance on the north side.

Closely spaced windows, separated by raised brick pilasters capped by stone, puncture the walls on all sides and levels of the courthouse. The corner, top floor windows are surmounted by decorative garlands. Similar trim is found above the paired pilasters flanking the main entrance. A double-wide window above the entrance is set in a segmental arched opening. The original windows were replaced when dropped ceilings were installed. The window alterations were tastefully done; the effect is not unattractive.

Between the first and second floor windows, polychrome ceramic flowers decorate recessed brick panels. The floral motif is repeated in the decorated frieze in the cornice above the windows on all four facades.

Aside from the lowered ceilings in the interior office spaces, the courthouse retains its interior integrity. An interior dome has a geometric-patterned stained glass skylight. Murals depicting early Wilkin County decorate the walls between the second floor arched openings that form the dome base. A star pattern decorates the terrazo floor below the dome. Many of the original brass and bronze stair rails and lights are still in place.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Wilkin County Courthouse is significant as the seat of county government and for its architecture. The 1928 design has been virtually unchanged over the years. The earlier courthouse burned, and Buechner and Orth, St. Paul architects, were commissioned to design the new building. At a cost of \$203,000, the stone and brick structure was built. The terrazo floors, steel and bronze doors and brass trim, and the ornamental plaster inside were all by Twin Cities firms. The only significant changes are dropped ceilings, new interior lighting, and the alteration of the windows. Completed just before the Great Depression, the Wilkin County courthouse is a late style of Minnesota's architecturally notable courthouses.