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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED AUG 11 1976
DATE ENTERED NOV 21 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

Thomas County Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

300 North Court

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Colby

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

No. 1 Keith Sebelius

STATE

Kansas

VICINITY OF

CODE
20

COUNTY
Thomas

CODE
193

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

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Thomas County

STREET & NUMBER

Thomas County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Colby

STATE

Kansas 67701

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Register of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

Thomas County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Colby

STATE

Kansas 67701

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic Sites Survey

DATE

1970

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Kansas State Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

Topeka

STATE

Kansas 66612

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Thomas County Courthouse is a massive, red brick building designed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. The focal point of the building is a five story tower which projects slightly forward from the west facade. At the base of this tower is a flight of stone steps leading up to a Syrian arch over the main entrance. The archway has two finely carved stone impost blocks, and the arch itself has been outlined with a stone molding. The string course widens above the arch and has the county name, construction date and a corbel molding carved in relief. The tower contains a Seth Thomas clock with four faces, and terminates in a pyramidal spire with wall dormers on each face. To either side of the tower on the west facade is a projecting wing. There are three, aligned rectangular windows on each story of these wings, including the half-basement. These windows have been joined at the lintels by variously treated string courses. The second story windows have brick arches that have been accented by a stone molding. The wide entablature with brackets and dentils has been broken below a wall dormer centrally placed on each wing. The hipped roof is now surfaced with off-white asphalt shingles instead of slate as it was originally.

A wall dormer flanked by chimneys is the central feature of the north and south facades. The string course widens on this bay between the first and second floors and incorporates a stone balustrade. Below this is a two story archway which has been broken by a wide string course that separates the first story and the basement. There is an entrance here to the basement level. To either side of this central bay are two aligned windows on each story. The second story windows have arches detailed like those on the west facade. There have been some minor alterations to the south facade; the basement entrance has been bricked in and the arch on the easternmost second story window has been replaced with a transom window.

The east facade has also been symmetrically designed around a tall chimney which rises above the roof line. There are three rectangular windows on each floor, including the basement, on either side of the chimney. The building wall steps back on the north and south ends of this facade. These walls have two windows on each floor and a window dormer that rises above a break in the entablature. The windows on the second story of the south end are crowned with blind arches accented by a thin stone band. The windows on the north side have rectangular transoms.

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 checked="" 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 1906-1907

BUILDER/ARCHITECT J. C. Holland

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Thomas County Courthouse was built in 1906-1907 from plans prepared by the architectural firm of J. C. Holland and Frank Squires of Topeka.

Thomas county had been created by the state legislature in 1873, but the first settlement was not made until 1879 and the rush of settlers did not come until 1884. In 1885 Governor John A. Martin was petitioned to organize the county. After a census was taken which enumerated 1,900 people, Martin on October 8, 1885, declared the county to be organized and designated Colby as the temporary county seat. An election was held November 17, 1885, to choose county officers and a permanent county seat. Colby was the almost unanimous choice.

A rectangular frame courthouse was erected in 1886. Although it was adequate in the county's early years, around the turn of the century sentiment began to increase for a new brick structure to house the county offices and records. This was especially the case when prosperity began to return to the High Plains after some lean years in the 1890's. Many people expressed concern about the safety of the old courthouse, the dangers of fire and the possible loss of landownership records and other data.

In the summer and fall of 1905 petitions were circulated calling for a bond election for a new courthouse. The county commissioners--Charles Hardin, James Earnest, and John D. Stover--responded by calling for a special election in November to vote on a \$50,000 bond issue for a new courthouse. On election day, November 21, a total of 757 ballots were cast, 380 for the proposition and 377 against. The county commissioners canvassed the returns on November 30 and the tally remained the same.

The commissioners interviewed a number of architects and eventually narrowed the choice to two prominent men--George P. Washburn and J. C. Holland. The commissioners had toured a number of courthouse structures and had been favorably impressed by Holland's work. The plans he submitted were closer to what they wanted and that apparently was the deciding factor in their vote to engage the firm of J. C. Holland and Frank Squires.

In late March, 1906, the plans and specifications were approved by the county commissioners. The project was then advertised for bids, which were opened on May 1. The general contract for the building was let to L. Crosby and Son of Kansas City, Mo., for \$41,705; the contract for the plumbing, electric wiring, etc., was awarded to F. A. Louis of Colby for \$3,638; the contract for the steel fixtures was let to Art Metal Construction Co. of St. Louis for \$1,350. The architect's fee was \$1,624.26, making the total cost of the contracts \$48,327.26.

The old frame courthouse was moved to a new location and excavation of the basement began the second week in June.

The cornerstone was laid Saturday, November 17, 1906. In charge of the ceremonies was the St. Thomas Masonic lodge of Colby. Various lodges, churches, organizations and

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

A Brief Sketch of Thomas County, Kansas, and the City of Colby (Thomas County Cat, Colby, Kan., 1887).

Colby Free Press, June 22, Sept. 28, Oct. 12, 19, Nov. 9, 1905; Feb. 8, 15, Mar. 29, May 3, Nov. 8, 22, 1906; July 18, Aug. 15, Nov. 28, 1907.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY two

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 4	3 2, 4	1, 2, 0	4, 3 6, 2	5, 0, 4	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C						D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Richard Pankratz, Director, Historic Sites Survey
Cornelia Wyma, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION Kansas State Historical Society

DATE June 4, 1976

STREET & NUMBER 120 West 10th Street

TELEPHONE 913-296-3251

CITY OR TOWN Topeka

STATE Kansas 66612

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL X

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 Hyle H. Miller

TITLE Executive Director, Kansas State Historical Society

DATE August 4, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE 11/21/96
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: [Signature]
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 11-16-76

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

8 SIGNIFICANCE

individuals had supplied histories, letters or other items of memorabilia for sealing in a metal box inside the cornerstone.

Construction work apparently ceased for the winter months as one Colby newspaper noted in late March, 1907, that work had started again. The editor chided the contractor for not having pushed ahead with the construction during the winter months like other contractors of large brick buildings in neighboring communities.

Much of the exterior work was being finished as the month of July ended. The slate roof was in place and workmen were washing down the walls. In August the commissioners purchased a four-faced Seth Thomas clock for installation in the tower. Part of the clock's \$1200 purchase price came from the \$501 received for the sale of the old courthouse.

Work on the interior continued well into November. The county officers moved into their new quarters the week of November 25, 1907, even though some parts of the building were not finished.

The Thomas County Courthouse has served for 70 years as the county's seat of government and is a landmark structure for the community. It is a late but finely constructed example of the Richardsonian Romanesque style and the work of an important early Kansas architect, J. C. Holland. Its large proportions are enhanced by the flatness of the surrounding plains which give the building feelings of permanence and strength.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Colby Tribune, Mar. 22, 29, Apr. 26, May 3, June 14, Nov. 8, 22, 1906; Mar. 28, July 25, Aug. 8, 15, 1907.

Gill, Helen G., "The Establishment of Counties in Kansas," Kansas Historical Collections, v. 8 (1903-1904), pp. 457, 461, 463.

Preliminary nomination form submitted by the Thomas County Historical Society.