

City, Village or Town: Sheboygan		County: Sheboygan	Surveyor: R. Schomberg D. Filipowicz L. Garfield	Date: 7/81 8/81	Street Number
Street Address: 615 N. Sixth St.		Legal Description: Lots 117-122, 166-177, Ellis Addition to the City of Sheboygan		Acres: approx. 2	
Current Name & Use: Sheboygan County Courthouse			Current Owner: County of Sheboygan; Attn: Roland Schomberg, County Clerk		Town Range Section Map Name
Film Roll No.	Affix Contact Prints		Current Owner's Address: 615 N. Sixth St., Sheboygan, WI		
Negative No.			Special Features Not Visible In Photographs: See Description in Architectural Statement, Item 3.		
Facade Orient.			Interior visited? <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No		

Original Name & Use:	Source	Previous Owners	Dates	Uses	Source
2 Sheboygan County Courthouse					
Dates of Construction: 1933/1956, 1968	Source A				
Architect and/or Builder: W. C. Weeks, Inc., Sheboygan; K. M. Vitzthum, Chicago	Source B				

3 Architectural Significance <input type="radio"/> Represents work of a master <input checked="" type="radio"/> Possesses high artistic values <input checked="" type="radio"/> Represents a type, period, or method of construction <input checked="" type="radio"/> Is a visual landmark in the area <input type="radio"/> Other: _____ <input type="radio"/> None.	4 Historical Significance <input type="radio"/> Assoc. with lives of significant persons <input type="radio"/> Assoc. with significant historical events <input type="radio"/> Assoc. with development of a locality <input checked="" type="radio"/> Other: _____ <input type="radio"/> None.
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Statement of Architectural Significance: Description: In a series of nine major and minor setbacks, the N. Sixth St. facade of the Sheboygan County Courthouse rises six stories above a two-story basement (exposed at the rear). From base dimension of 230 x 74 feet, the "incised" monolith tapers to 204 x 45 feet at the roof. The Moderne hallmark chevron pattern is cut into panels and buttresses in the buff Indiana limestone walls, alternating with regularly-spaced multi-paned windows. A gray granite plaza and steps preface the entrance, (over)	Statement of Historical Significance: Built in the midst of the Great Depression, after nearly a decade of inter-governmental planning (and frequent controversy), the Sheboygan County Courthouse is decidedly modern in spirit and construction, a "visible symbol" (according to the dedication address) of the "increasing responsibilities" of twentieth century Sheboygan County government. ^D When the cornerstone was laid in the fall of 1933, Circuit Judge Edward Voigt declared that the rising structure inspired a "pride of civic accomplishment" (C, p. 5) and since its completion in 1934, the structure has been both the physical and symbolic center of county government, a thoroughly contemporary structure in sharp contrast to the (over)
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Sources of Information (Reference to Above)
Cornerstone
Dedication plaque
Sheboygan County Landmarks, Ltd., "Sheboygan County Courthouse, 1934," 1976, n.p.
Sheboygan Press, August 28, 1934 (Vol. XXVII, No. 214), p. 3.
Sheboygan Press, August 25, 1934 (Vol. XXVII, No. 212), p. 13-14. (continued)

7 Representation in Previous Surveys: <input type="radio"/> NRHP <input type="radio"/> WRL <input type="radio"/> Local Landmark <input type="radio"/> HABS <input checked="" type="radio"/> Other: Landmark--SB Co., WIHP	6 District Classification District Name: _____ <input type="radio"/> Pivotal <input type="radio"/> Contributing <input type="radio"/> Non-Contributing Initials: _____ Date: _____
8 Eligibility for the National Register <input checked="" type="radio"/> Eligible <input type="radio"/> Not Eligible <input type="radio"/> Unknown Local Initials: DHF Date: 10/81	MAP CODE

Architectural Statement (cont.):

formed by three pairs of glazed aluminum double doors topped by polished aluminum grills. Stylized winged lions trim the ends of the engaged stepped parapet over the portal; "Sheboygan County Courthouse" is cut into the face. To the rear (east), a four-story addition (1956) in like materials and style is connected to the original by a narrow overpass. (The sloping parking lot is framed by a well-tended residential area overlooking the lake. The building faces a fringe of nineteenth and twentieth century residences bordering the commercial area.)

The interior lobby and halls are lined with Etowah pink Georgia marble walls above a Belgian black marble base, with brass-seamed terrazo floors. Aluminum and brass lighting brackets, polished aluminum grills and stair rails, and aluminum and brass plaques, doors, and directory decorate the lobby. A series of shallow recessions and chevron borders edge the plaster ceilings. County offices are located along the north and south corridors, and the jail occupies the sixth floor. The original two courtrooms (Circuit Court in the north wing and Probate Court in the south wing), which once rose two full stories through the second and third floors, were subdivided in 1968; the walnut- and oak-paneled chambers were altered at a cost of \$975,000, four hundred thousand dollars more than the original cost of building construction.

Significance: Architecturally, the Moderne Style Sheboygan County Courthouse is a distinguished representative of a period of construction. Isolated (until the new Law Enforcement Center to the south was completed this year) in the center of the seventeen-lot former courthouse site, the building seems even more a faceted monolithic landmark near the Lake Michigan shore. Sheboygan architect W. C. Weeks (1856-1938), whose father A. C. Weeks designed the previous county courthouse of 1868, produced the design in association with Chicago architect K. M. Vitzthum and Satre & Senescall of Sheboygan. (Weeks, who practiced in Sheboygan all of his life, was listed in the city directories as a carpenter until his father's death, when he assumed the elder's title; when W. C. himself died, his son W. F. inherited the practice.)

Historical Statement (cont.):

tradition-laden courthouses of previous decades. The building was the product of considerable agitation and a concerted effort by the County Board of Supervisors to insure the most modern (and monumental) offices for county government. As early as 1925, Sheboygan County had clearly outgrown the antiquated facilities of the old courthouse, and a County Board committee recommended that a new structure be erected to house the expanding county government. In 1926, the City of Sheboygan proposed to the County Board that a civic center be constructed, including a proposed courthouse. Although those initial plans were laid aside, the county did levy a half-mill tax, beginning in 1927, for the purpose of raising a courthouse building fund and the Board appointed a building committee to select a site and plan. Insistent on the finest facilities, the building committee travelled to several Wisconsin county seats, including Kenosha and Green Bay, to review recent courthouse construction^E. The Board itself interviewed 14 Midwestern architects (and considered a number of submitted plans as well) in a determined effort to insure a suitable building. Only after that time-consuming process did the Board finally agree, in January, 1933, to select K. M. Vitzthum and Co., Chicago,^F whose severely geometric design (credited to John Burns),^G with sleek lines and set-backs, seemed to echo the Board's insistence on contemporary design. The Board itself helped make decisions regarding style, plan, and even material, and carefully monitored the construction.

The new courthouse was constructed on the site of the old building (which was razed in the course of construction)--a site originally set aside in 1851 for courthouse purposes. (C, P.1) But the selection of that site was preceded by a complicated debate which stalled the project several years. From 1931 until 1933, the County Board debated the merits of several sites and attempted to give the city the old courthouse in exchange for a new site in Fountain park.

Not until November, 1932, when K. M. Vitzthum first presented his plans with a guaranteed price tag of \$600,000, did the Board begin to act. Avoiding protracted litigation, and taking advantage of depressed construction prices, the Board soon voted to build

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SHEBOYGAN COUNTY COURTHOUSE
Intensive Survey Form - Continuation Sheet

Historical Statement (cont.):

the new courthouse on the site of the old.^C

The timing, if delayed, was still fortuitous. As a result of accumulated taxes and reduced costs, the building came in well below expectations. Interestingly, in August 1933, with county monies tied up in closed banks and delinquent tax accounts, the county applied for \$200,000 in federal monies.^H Nevertheless, at the dedication in August 1934, Judge F. H. Schlichting noted that the building was constructed at "an opportune time, when material and construction costs were at their lowest," for a price that could "not be duplicated" even on dedication day.^D

When completed, the Board got exactly what it wanted: a building that cost less than \$600,000 and which was described by the architects as "something entirely new in the building field."^E Just as important, the project employed 200 Sheboygan workers at a time of high unemployment.^F

At the dedication of the Courthouse in August 1934, Wisconsin Supreme Court Chief Justice Marvin Rosenberry saw the building--and the concerted effort behind its construction--as a physical symbol of the expanded bureaucracy charged with "the administration of the business and political affairs of the people," home of the numerous "administrative bodies and committees" which comprised modern Sheboygan County government.^D Reviewing the same growth of county affairs, Judge Schlichting simply noted that the new Courthouse "climaxes our progress to date."^D Their assessment of the building's role in history was not premature: since its opening day, which coincided with the centennial observance of Sheboygan's founding, the Courthouse has remained a landmark building in Sheboygan (designated an official Landmark by Sheboygan County Landmarks, Ltd., on May 1, 1976).^G

Sources of Information (cont.):

F Sheboygan Press, January 16, 1933 (Vol. XXVI, No. 24), p. 1.

G Sheboygan County Landmarks, Ltd. Heritage Walk in Old Sheboygan, Sheboygan, 1972 n.p. (p. 19?).

H Sheboygan Press, August 12, 1933, (Vol. XXVI, No. 200), p. 1.

