

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 checked="" 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

Thirteen county courthouses in North Dakota were designed by the St. Paul, Minnesota, architectural firm of Buechner and Orth between 1905 and 1919. Designed in a somewhat subdued version of Beaux Arts Neo Classicism, most of these buildings feature projecting central pavilions with paired stone columns or columns and pilasters with Corinthian capitals. Cornices are adorned with modillions and dentils, and pavilions are often surmounted with dentiled pediments. The buildings rise two full stories above a raised foundation. In all buildings except the Pembina County Courthouse, flat roofs give rise to a metal-covered central dome. Embellished in rich classical and Renaissance detail, the dome and the central projection of the front facade are the visual foci of the buildings.

Interiors feature a lavishly ornamented two-story plus rotunda, usually with an art glass skylight. Second story hallways open into the rotunda through ornate keystone arched opertures, and floorlines, pilasters, and moldings are enriched in rosettes, egg-and-dart and other patterns. Murals depicting pioneer scenes of the respective counties occur in the upper walls or dome of the rotunda above the second story level. Courtrooms also feature murals above the judge's station, coffered ceilings, and stenciled wall adornments. Floors are usually terrazzo, with marble wainscoting in the front landing and rotunda areas of the ground floor.

The courthouses are set on full blocks, and are surrounded by extensive lawns, trees, shrubbery, and a paved parking lot at the rear. A two-story brick jail and sheriff's residence accompany five of the courthouses. Constructed of the same materials as the courthouses, the ancillary buildings are most distinguished by dentiled cornices and monumental polygonal brick chimneys. The jail/sheriff's residences are located to the rear of the courthouses, and are unobtrusive to the larger structures.

Trail County Courthouse, Hillsboro (1905)

Built of brown brick over a white stone foundation, the building features a tall domed tower with bull's-eye windows at the cardinal directions and capped with a belvedere and knob finial. Each of the eight tower angles is emphasized by a stone Corinthian column, and each plane contains a tall keystone arch window. The arch pattern is carried through the center bay of the front facade, but all other openings are linteled. Paired pilasters separate second story windows, and the front and rear facades are enriched with garlands, festoons, and elaborate mouldings of limestone.

The interior features an operational skylight, well-preserved murals, and scallop-headed niches in the rotunda. The second floor courtroom has richly stenciled coffered ceiling and massive oak balustrade. The building retains complete exterior integrity, and the painting over of stencils on the first and second floor walls in the early 1950's has been the only major interior alteration.